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Auto sector set to lose 15,000 jobs

CANADA The Canadian auto industry will lose 15,000 jobs by the end of 2009 as a "maelstrom" of change hits the sector, says an economist with the Conference Board of Canada.

The projection from the non-profit research group predicts the industry will lose $1.7 billion this year as new vehicle production declines by 15.3 per cent.

Conference Board economist Sabrina Browarski said the drop is attributable primarily to reduced demand for new vehicles in the U.S.

Production is expected to reach an eight-year low in 2009, adding up to another $1 billion in losses.

Browarski said the total damage will likely come to 15,000 lost jobs in the vehicle assembly sector alone, with even more expected at auto parts manufacturers and other spinoff industries. THE CANADIAN PRESS

Sports pg 19

Leafs a pen away from Burke era

Canada pg 8

CF fundraiser dropped over race, gender

Food banks **Speaking up for the poor**

PATRICK DELL/TORSTAR NEWS SERVICE

Gail Nyberg, executive director of the Daily Bread Food Bank, stands at the facility in Toronto yesterday. Food Banks Canada is urging the federal government to help the poor with tax breaks as the country heads into a likely recession. **Story, page 11.**

Plastic for a price

Shoppers to pay 5 cents a bag under 'alternative proposal'

Shoppers will have to pay five cents for every plastic shopping bag they get from stores in Toronto under a proposal worked out between the city and big grocery companies.

Industry officials from the Canadian Council of Grocery Distributors, which represents the large chains, have called a news conference today to announce what they call an "alternative proposal" to the city's plan to curb plastic bags.

But since Mayor David Miller's office relayed the news release, and Miller will attend the event, the big grocers' proposal appears to have his blessing.

Council approval would be needed for a bylaw putting the fee in place. And instead of being required to give customers a 10-cent refund for every bag eliminated, as the city originally proposed, grocery stores and retailers will probably be able to keep the money.

At the same time, they will need to commit to firm deadlines for sharply reducing or eliminating plastic bags not designed for reuse. That's likely to mean promising to slash plastic bag use by 70 per cent as of 2012; another proposal would require eliminating the bags totally at a later date.

Allowing retailers to keep the money lets the city argue the charge is not a tax. There are limits on the city's taxing powers and an attempt to levy a tax on plastic bags would probably be challenged in court. TORSTAR NEWS SERVICE

Retailers fight refund plan

• Grocery retailers had lobbied against giving a 10-cent refund for every bag eliminated, as recommended in a city report, arguing the refund would drive up costs and thus grocery prices.

Winter to be warm and snowy, experts say

RECORD Toronto is on course to set a record for its wettest year ever.

More than 930 millimetres of rain and snow have fallen in the city since the beginning of January, putting Toronto less than 40 mm within shattering the 1977 record: 971 mm.

The latest seasonal forecasts from Environment Canada point to a winter that will see both above normal precipitation and temperatures for Torontonians. The "normal" amount of snow for Toronto is about 115 centimetres, says Environment Canada's Dave Phillips. Last year, Toronto received 194 cm, 13 cm short of the snowiest winter on record: 1938-39.

$300
The amount Quebec drivers will be fined for not using winter tires under a new law, which is creating a tire shortage in Ontario.

And with memories of last year still fresh, residents are stocking up on winter gear early with retailers already reporting big jumps in sales of everything from snow tires, snow blowers and shovels to winter jackets, boots and road salt. TORSTAR NEWS SERVICE

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Fed cash would aid Transit City, Miller says
Toronto's proposed new light rail network, Transit City, could get rolling sooner if the federal government doles out infrastructure cash to help the economy, says Mayor David Miller. No federal money is currently earmarked for the $8-billion project, Miller said. TORSTAR NEWS SERVICE

Local

Police warn of suspicious vehicles

Toronto police are investigating three separate incidents involving drivers acting in a suspicious manner near public schools in the south end of Scarborough. Officers urge parents talk with their children and report any incidents of suspicious behaviour. Toronto police say children should be wary of vehicles idling near schools or circling schools at hours when children are outside.

TORSTAR NEWS SERVICE

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These results are not official.

TORSTAR NEWS SERVICE FILE PHOTO

The new Metrolinx 25-year, $50-billion blueprint proposes a revitalized Union Station.

Big Move for Union Station

Union Station gets an expanded role in the final edition of the Toronto regional transportation plan, released yesterday by Metrolinx.

The rejigged version of the new 25-year, $50-billion blueprint to ease road congestion foresees an expanded, revitalized Union Station as one of nine "Big Moves" to reduce car use in the Toronto area.

Another new Metrolinx study, also released yesterday, predicts the cost of congestion in the region, pegged at $6 billion in 2006, will grow to $15 billion by 2031 if the province fails to act.

The regional plan has been amended slightly since the draft was released in September, following public and stakeholder consultations, said Metrolinx chair Rob MacIsaac.

"Fundamentally, we haven't changed course in any major way. We have added in lines in Brampton, we've extended (some) in Durham, we've added some lines in Halton and we've tweaked some of the policies in response to input we got," he said.

TORSTAR NEWS SERVICE

Boardrooms lack diversity

Minorities left out at top: Report

Toronto may be the most diverse city in the world, but boardrooms across the city are not following suit. Instead, there is a "striking" lack of inclusiveness at the top of public, private and non-profit organizations across the city, according to a report to be released today.

The Value of Diverse Leadership was commissioned by the Toronto City Summit Alliance and the Maytree Foundation to make a business case for the importance of making diversity a priority at the "board level."

The findings of the report, many of which have been known for years, serves as the impetus for the DiverseCity initiative, as a plan for increasing diversity in leadership roles.

City council

• One glaring example Omidvar cites is city council. In a city where almost 50 per cent of the population is a visible minority, only four of 44 city councillors are members of visible minorities.

"There is a diversity deficit in the leadership landscape of the GTA," said Ratna Omidvar, president of the Maytree Foundation.

"Whether you look at Bay Street, or public service, who sits at board tables, or who is elected to run the city, there is a deficit in each one of these places," she said.

Over time, the demographics at the top will naturally change to reflect the community, says Omidvar.

TORSTAR NEWS SERVICE

Police warn about suspicious drivers near schools

Toronto police are investigating three separate incidents involving drivers acting in a suspicious manner near public schools in the south end of Scarborough. Officers urge parents to talk with their children and report any incidents of suspicious behaviour. **TORSTAR NEWS SERVICE**

No age for distractions

Older brains more easily diverted, U of T study finds

Reading the newspaper? Studying for a test? Trying to balance the bank book? It might be best to turn off the TV.

Toronto scientists have found further evidence that older adults have a hard time tuning out distractions when concentrating on a single task.

The new research, reported yesterday, suggests older brains are less able to filter irrelevant information from the environment, such as background noise, than the brains of younger adults.

This unnecessary brain "idling" seems to make it more difficult for older adults to focus on the task at hand, said study lead author Dale Stevens, who conducted the research at the Rotman Research Institute at Baycrest as a doctorial student at University of Toronto.

TONY BOCK/TORSTAR NEWS SERVICE

Scientist Cheryl Grady stands in front of a scanner and display at the functional MRI research lab at the Baycrest Centre. Grady was part of a University of Toronto study on brains of older adults.

It is known from behavioural studies that older adults are more easily distracted, but this is the first to look at what is going on in the brain when people try to form a memory and fail, said Stevens.

The study, published yesterday in the Journal of Neuroscience, also suggests auditory distractions may prevent older people from properly filing memories.

TORSTAR NEWS SERVICE

YouTube vids add to buzz over salvia

In one of more than 6,000 YouTube videos tagged "salvia" for the plant salvia divinorum, a young man introduces himself as "Eric, your host" and prepares to smoke the hallucinogenic drug before giving a driving lesson.

Sitting in the driver's seat with his car off and in park, Eric takes a hit from a pipe and adjusts his mirrors. He exhales and becomes almost instantaneously dopey and indecipherable.

Such videos are bringing new attention to salvia, which traditionally has been used by Mexican shamans for meditation and healing. It is legal in Canada and can be purchased online and in Toronto head shops and some convenience stores.

"We are aware that it is out there in the community," said Det. Don Theriault of the Toronto police drug squad. "But in terms of complaints coming to the drug squad, there isn't a large problem with it at the moment, so we'll have to see how it develops over the next couple of years."

Salvia experimentation brings mixed reviews. Alex Duffy, 24, says the drug's brief high — less than 30 minutes — makes him feel a relaxing sense of unity with things bigger than himself.

Others, like Keith Wong, 26, try salvia once and have no strong desire to do it again. It was "interesting," he says, but not for him. **TORSTAR NEWS SERVICE**

Use in N. America

- This year the U.S. government published its first estimates of salvia use, finding that 1.8 million Americans had tried it. There are no such Canadian statistics, but the Toronto police and Health Canada both say they are monitoring use of the drug.

Management overhaul urged

ZOO The union representing workers at the Toronto Zoo has called for a top-to-bottom overhaul of the zoo's management structure — from the board of management through its senior executives.

But chief executive Calvin White says the union's position, expressed in a news release, "dumbfounds me."

White says the representative of Canadian Union of Public Employees Local 1600 have never expressed any displeasure at regular union-management meetings.

The open spat with the union comes in a year when the zoo's board and management have been in turmoil.

The board and the zoo's fundraising arm, the Toronto Zoo Foundation, publicly sparred earlier this year, and the foundation decided to dissolve itself.

TORSTAR NEWS SERVICE

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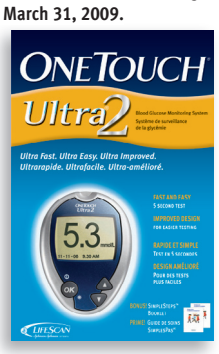

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York U., union to resume strike talks
York University and its striking teaching staff plan to meet tomorrow with a mediator to see if there are grounds to resume talks. TORSTAR NEWS SERVICE

Working together

Women's group marks 10th anniversary

TAGHREED SAADEH
for Metro Toronto

Women from different beliefs gathered recently to celebrate the 10th anniversary of Federation of Muslim Women (FMW) at the Mississauga Grand Convention Centre.

"During the past few years FMW has worked at the grassroots level to educate the Muslim and mainstream communities about Islam and Muslims, and to alleviate poverty both within the local and global contexts," said Zahida Murtaza, co-chair of FMW.

"We have developed teaching materials that are used by the school system in anti-racism education," she added.

"Over the past decade, we have also networked with the police, RCMP, and many groups who provide support to victims of poverty and violence," she said.

Murtaza indicated that FMW has been fortunate to be able to work with many partners on various projects. "Our greatest asset is our diversity," she said.

"Now it's time that all women in different faiths ... work together."
Hazel McCallion

Mississauga Mayor Hazel McCallion said at the celebration, "Now it's time that all women in different faiths, Christianity, Islam, Judaism and others to work together.

"We all believe in one God, but our practising is different, that make the diversity and make us work together for better society," she added. "I wish we all work together not only here but throughout the world," McCallion said.

Premier Dalton McGuinty said in a message to FMW: "The Muslim community has made many contributions to the economic, social and cultural life of our great province.

"You work hard in and with dedication to fostering a greater understanding of Islam and to alleviating poverty both at home and abroad," he added.

FMW represents many cultures from different geographical regions of the world.

"It works towards the empowerment of women and children through raising awareness and education that ensures the dignity and worth of all people," Murtaza said.

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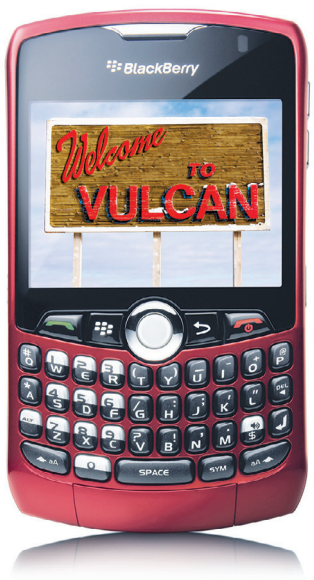

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Country's rail use, revenues up in 2007

Canada's railways set records in 2007 in terms of revenue, freight carried and number of passengers, the publication Rail Trends reported. The number of passengers grew to a record 67.9 million and passenger revenue was $624 million, an increase of $2 million over 2006. **THE CANADIAN PRESS**

Canada

Postal union says to expect delays

Public Service Alliance of Canada National President John Gordon looks on as Canadian Union of Postal Workers National President Denis Lemelin speaks about how an administrative strike at Canada Post will cause massive delays as the Christmas season approaches. Canada Post has denied delays are imminent and has said they have resolved the backlog problems they experienced last week. THE CANADIAN PRESS

Disease not 'diverse'

Ottawa student group dropping CF support

DEREK GORDANIER
Metro Canada

An Ottawa university students' group has voted to discontinue its annual fundraiser for Cystic Fibrosis, on the basis that the disease mostly affects "white people, and primarily men," and is not "diverse" enough for students' continued support.

Although some student leaders yesterday downplayed the reference to race and gender, the Carleton University Students Association's (CUSA) resolution includes a line saying that "whereas" CF is a disease "recently revealed to only affect white people, and primarily men" CUSA will discontinue its 'Shinerama' fund raiser, which has raised nearly $1 million locally.

Meera Chander, who seconded the motion, said some students had suggested during Orientation Week that CF did not affect a broad enough range of people to accurately reflect Carleton's makeup.

"(CF) only affects a certain demographic of the population and we feel that we should be focusing more on a local charity … that applies to the demographics of Carleton University," Chander said.

But Cathleen Morrison with the Canadian Cystic Fibrosis Foundation said that the students' assertions "are incorrect."

CF is the most common, fatal genetic disease affecting young Canadians and it doesn't discriminate among gender or skin colour, said Morrison, CCFF chief executive.

Group defends decision

- CUSA president Brittany Smyth defended the decision yesterday, saying that discussion before the vote focused more on considering a new charity than the issues of the race and gender that the disease strikes.

Arrest **Staged suicide charge**

GARY KEAN/THE CANADIAN PRESS

A Newfoundland man arrested after being given up for dead in 2006 eluded capture by moving across the country, assuming a different name and donning a wig, says the RCMP. Bruce Leyte, 57, appeared in a Corner Brook, N.L. court yesterday on charges of fraud related to an alleged faked suicide.

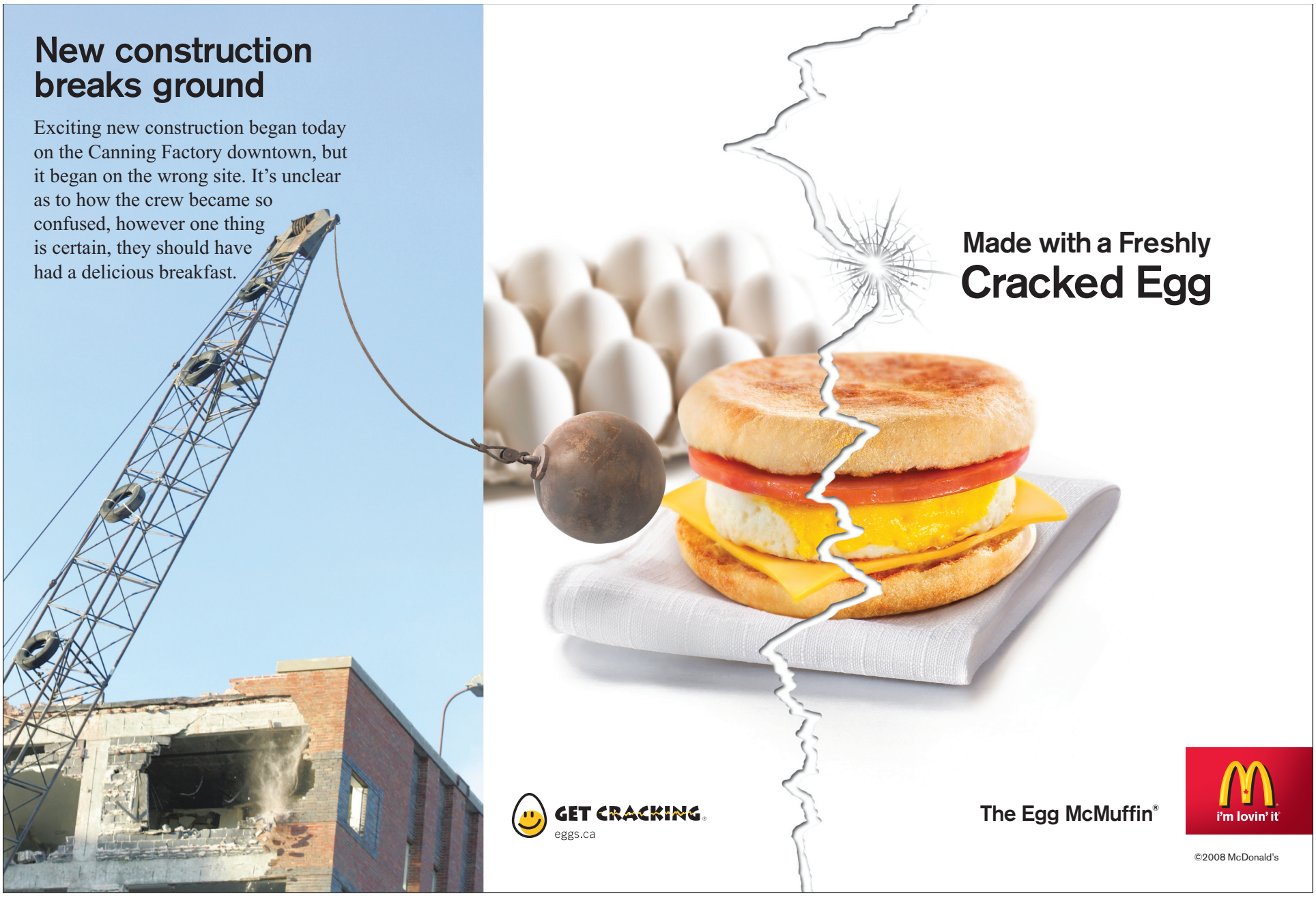
News in brief

ECONOMY The Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development says Canada will not be immune from the current global malaise and will see its economy shrink by an average of 0.5 per cent next year. The group says almost all the 30 developed countries that make up the OECD have already entered the recession.

TAXES Ontario Premier Dalton McGuinty is rejecting key recommendations from the province's own task force on competitiveness, including a call to harmonize provincial and federal sales taxes because it would drive up the prices of many consumer goods.

TORIES As economic storm clouds continue to darken, Finance Minister Jim Flaherty will speak tomorrow on the actions the Tories are taking, including clamping down on spending by politicians.

THE CANADIAN PRESS



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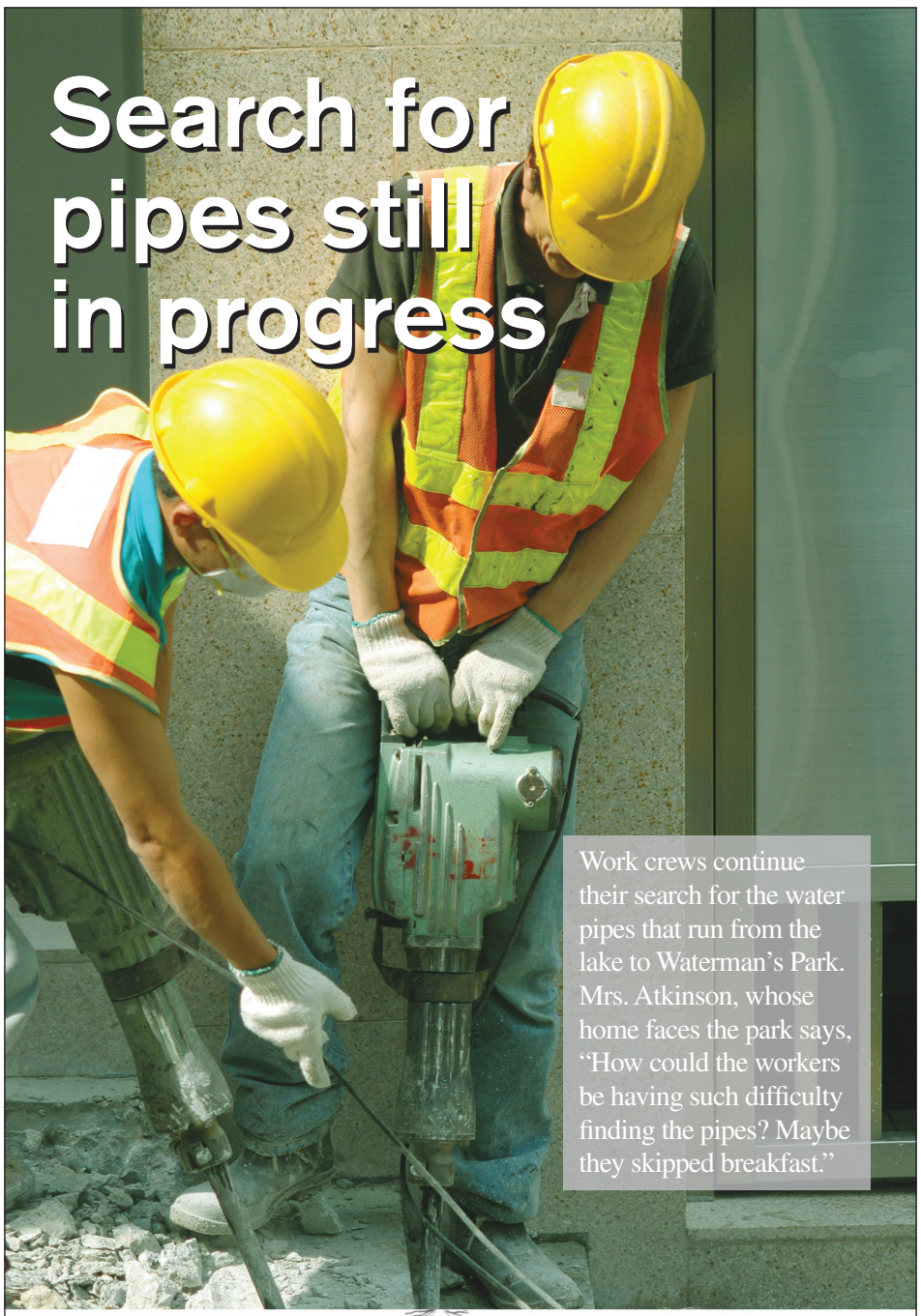
Yorkdale Mall

Search for pipes still in progress



Work crews continue their search for the water pipes that run from the lake to Waterman's Park. Mrs. Atkinson, whose home faces the park says, "How could the workers be having such difficulty finding the pipes? Maybe they skipped breakfast."

Man accused of war crimes remains in Canada
A refugee board ruled yesterday Josip Budimcic, accused of war crimes in Croatia, will be allowed to remain in Canada. THE CANADIAN PRESS

Ending violence against women

YWCA Canada has launched a national "Rose Button" campaign calling on the Harper government to develop an action plan to stop violence against women.

Paulette Senior, the group's CEO, said a "major societal shift" is needed to end the problem. And she said federal action now will save lives.

The campaign urges Canadians to e-mail their MPs a virtual rose on Dec. 6, the 19th anniversary of the Montreal massacre, in which gunman Marc Lepine shot 14 women dead.

"To prevent violence before it starts, it must be treated as unacceptable behaviour whenever and wherever it occurs," said a YWCA statement.

"It must be treated as unacceptable behaviour whenever and wherever it occurs" YWCA statement

The Liberals immediately responded with a motion in Parliament asking the Conservative government to develop a nationwide Violence Prevention Strategy, especially in regard to aboriginal women.

The YWCA quoted federal government statistics estimating the medical costs of violence against women at $1.1 billion a year, plus $4 billion annually for criminal justice, social services, and lost productivity. THE CANADIAN PRESS

NICOLE KIDMAN PROTEST AT UN, PG. 13.

McGuinty responds to online furor

YOUNG DRIVERS A growing online protest against Ontario's proposed new restrictions on teenage drivers is a positive development because it means young people are actively engaged in an important debate, Premier Dalton McGuinty said yesterday.

A Facebook group was set up last week after Ontario announced drivers aged 16 to 19 with a G2 graduated licence would be restricted to only one other teen passenger, and the group quickly grew to more than 110,000 members.

The restrictions on teen passengers are part of a package of new rules for young motorists, which also include a zero blood-alcohol limit for all Ontario drivers aged 21.

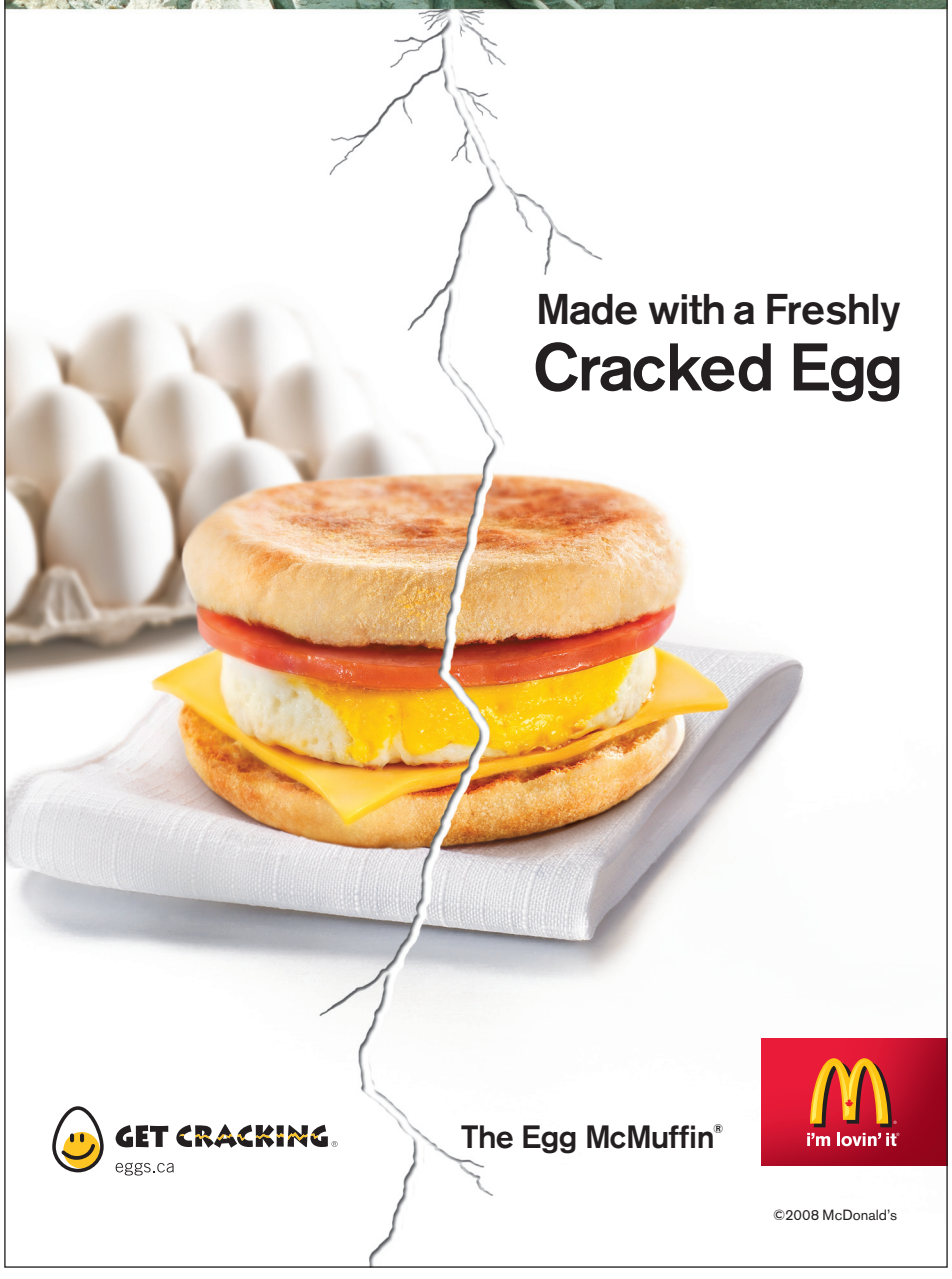
THE CANADIAN PRESS

News in brief

DRUGS A more competitive generic drug market could save Canada's health-care system $800 million a year, the Competition Bureau says in a study released yesterday.

COOKIES Girl Guides of Canada says that starting in the spring, the classic chocolate and vanilla sandwich cookies will have 90 per cent less trans fat. The U.S. Guides made the move two years ago.

THE CANADIAN PRESS



Paralyzed MP argues against payout limits
A paralyzed Conservative MP will argue to the Supreme Court that Manitoba's insurance payout limit penalizes active lives. THE CANADIAN PRESS

Working poor need food banks: Survey

The number of working people using food banks has hit an all-time high as donations dwindle, says the 12th annual survey of emergency programs taken each March.

Hunger Count 2008 found that 704,414 people — more than one-third of them children — use food banks in an average month.

That's a slight overall dip from last year when 720,231 users were counted by Food Banks Canada, a charity that relies on donations and volunteers.

But executive director Katharine Schmidt stressed that the number of people considered "working poor" has never been seen before. It has risen to 14.5 per cent of food bank users from just under 12 per cent in 2002.

"Many will be surprised to know that food bank use among working Canadians is growing," Schmidt said yesterday "This trend is troubling."

She cited the mass loss of well-paid jobs in the auto and forestry sectors, many of them replaced by retail jobs that pay much less and are often part-time without benefits.

Food Banks Canada added its voice yesterday to other social advocates calling on Ottawa to craft a national anti-poverty strategy with clear timelines and goals

Human Resources Minister Diane Finley cited a range of tax credits and benefits that the Conservatives already offer. Federal payments of $1,200 a year (before tax) for each child under age six have taken 55,000 children out of the low-income bracket.

THE CANADIAN PRESS

704,414

The number of people who used food banks per month in 2008. Statistics suggest that more than one-third of the recipients were children.

Green leader May calls for post-Kyoto pact

POLITICS Green party Leader Elizabeth May says the threat of climate change makes the global economic meltdown look like a "Sunday school picnic."

May plans to attend United Nations meetings next week in Poland, which will plan for next year's major climate-change conference in Copenhagen.

The Copenhagen summit is supposed to produce a successor to the Kyoto Protocol, an international agreement on reducing greenhouse gases, which expires in 2012. May says a new pact to cover the post-Kyoto period is needed quickly because the world is approaching a point of no return. THE CANADIAN PRESS

Aga Khan thanks Canada for welcoming Ismailis

The leader of the world's 15 million Ismaili Muslims says Canada's pluralism is a model to the world. The Aga Khan thanked Canada for welcoming Ismailis, a moderate group within the Shia wing of Islam as he capped a four-city tour of Canada celebrating the 50th anniversary of his position as the community's 49th Imam. THE CANADIAN PRESS

Phillion case nearing close

Questions persist about how and why police cleared Romeo Phillion of murder then later decided his alibi was false, and why his lawyer never broached the subject at trial in 1972, as Ontario's highest court grappled yesterday with whether a wrongful conviction occurred.

Throughout her closing arguments, Crown lawyer Lucy Cecchetto attempted to persuade the three Appeal Court justices that nothing legally nefarious happened — that Phillion's alibi simply proved not to hold water and the defence knew that.

Court records show Phillion's trial lawyer, Arthur Cogan, never mentioned the alibi at any time.

The Crown's theory is that police initially cleared Phillion based on second-hand information, and McCombie subsequently debunked the alibi after an investigation, though no records support that view.

This was the second day of Cecchetto's closing statements and is expected to continue for at least one more. The hearing continues today.

THE CANADIAN PRESS

Police reports

- What is clear is that police, by their own reports, quickly concluded that Phillion, now 69, had been out of town in August 1967 with car trouble when Ottawa firefighter Leopold Roy was stabbed to death.

McGuinty praises Ottawa over seats

POLITICS Premier Dalton McGuinty is hailing signs that Ottawa plans to give Ontario greater representation in the House of Commons.

McGuinty said yesterday he was encouraged that in last week's throne speech Prime Minister Stephen Harper broached what has been a controversial subject.

"It's good news," the Premier said. "It represents real progress in terms of the relationship that Ontarians have with our new federal government. So we take heart in that."

The throne speech promised the government "will introduce legislation to move toward representation by population in the House of Commons for Ontario, British Columbia and Alberta."

Dalton McGuinty

Under the old proposed legislation, Bill C-22, B.C. would have gained seven seats and Alberta five, but Ontario would have received only 10 — about half of the 21 it should be entitled to according to rising population numbers.

TORSTAR NEWS SERVICE

News in brief

SCHOOL Queen's University students will throw their own homecoming next fall, after the school cancelled the event for two years because of rowdy behaviour. TORSTAR NEWS SERVICE

Edmonton cop convicted of assault honoured

VICTORIA HANDYSIDES
Metro Canada

ALBERTA An Edmonton police officer who was convicted of assault in July has been named the best of the best.

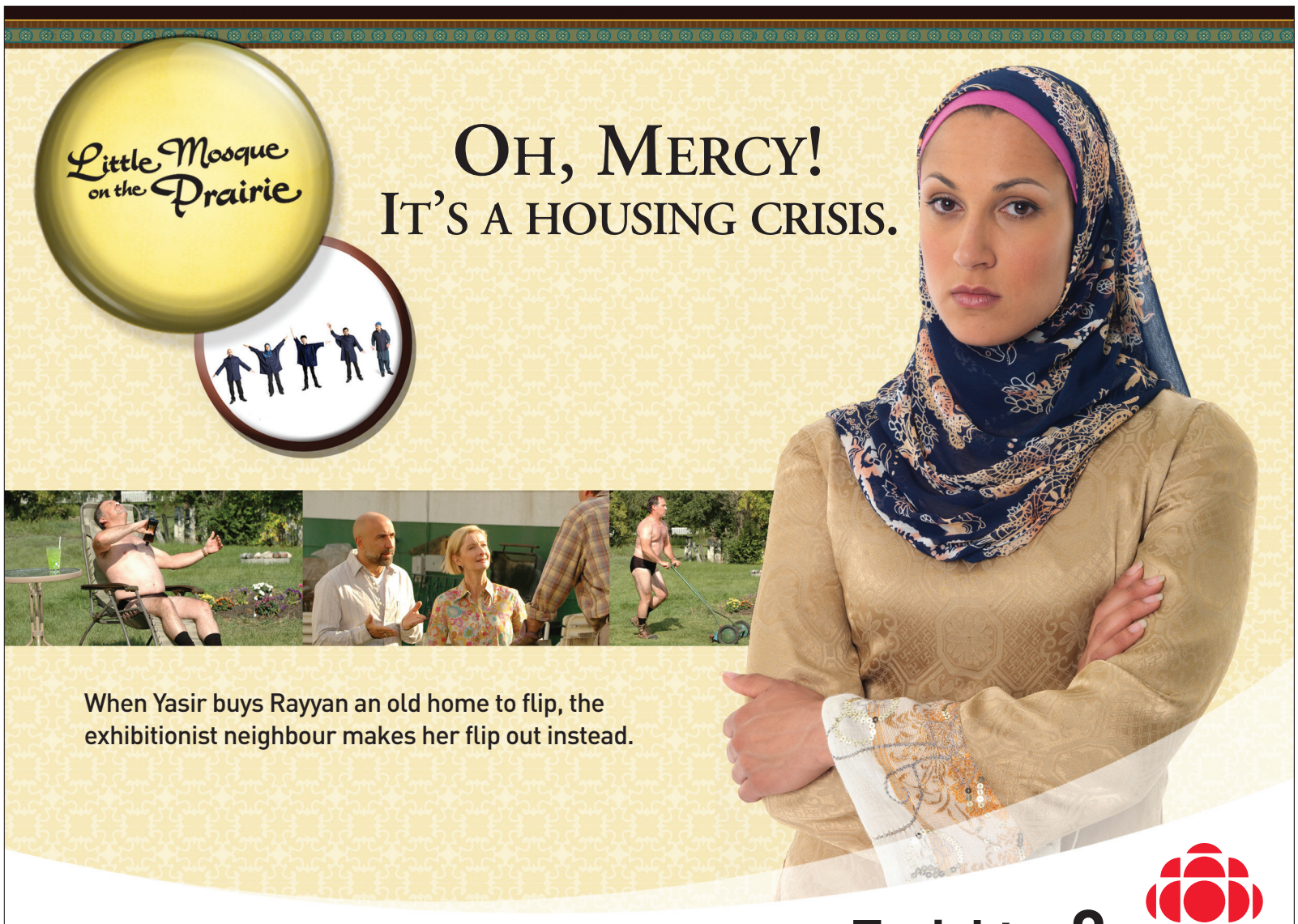
Staff Sgt. Jamie Ewatski was handed the Kiwanis 'Top Cop' Award in a short ceremony at Police Headquarters yesterday morning for his 30 years of service, and 13 years of committing to keep kids off drugs.

Ewatski, 48, and Staff Sgt. Giovanni (John) Fiorilli, 48, were convicted of assault on July 8, after 47-year-old Herve Dubois claimed the officers pepper-sprayed and arrested him in his home without a warrant in December 2004.

"This (award) maybe solidifies a few things that were brought to the attention in court that day. Realistically, the people who know me, know what I am and who I am," he said yesterday.

Decision

- Ewatski was handed an absolute discharge, which would mean he'd have no criminal record if he completes 60 hours of community service. He appealed the conviction and proceedings of the discharge begin Dec. 11.



Miami judge rules Florida's ban on gay adoption is unconstitutional
A judge yesterday ruled that a strict Florida law that blocks gay people from adopting children is unconstitutional, declaring there was no legal or scientific reason for sexual orientation alone to prohibit anyone from adopting. THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

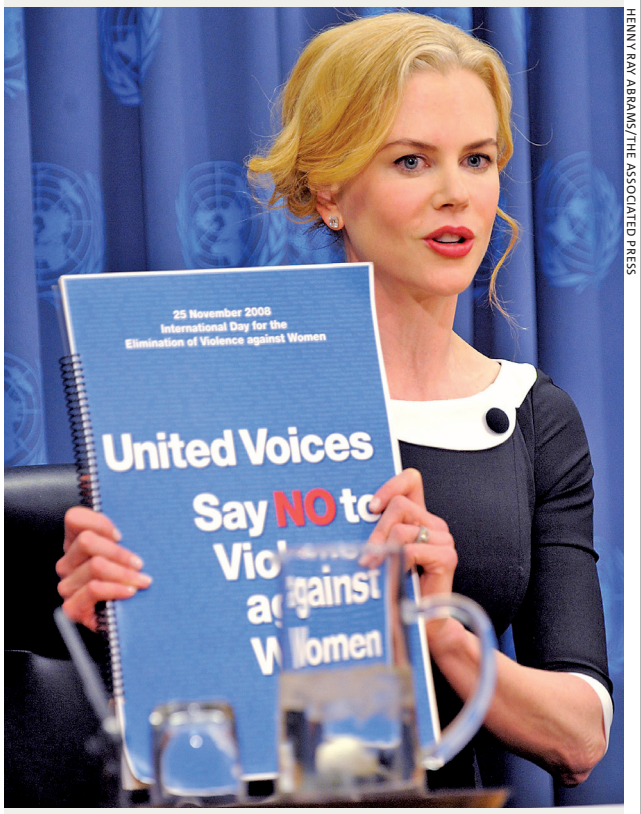
World

N.Y. adopts transit text alert system

New York's Metropolitan Transportation Authority launched a new text messaging and e-mail alert program yesterday to keep riders informed about service changes. The push for the program was heightened by an August 2007 storm, which shut down much of the subway system and left riders clamouring for information.

THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

UN Fighting the abuse of women



HENNY RAY ABRAMS/THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

United Nations Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM) goodwill ambassador Nicole Kidman holds up a copy of a report to announce the results of UNIFEM's "Say No to Violence Against Women" campaign at UN headquarters yesterday.

Recovery over deficit: Obama

With the economy growing weaker, U.S. president-elect Barack Obama said yesterday that recovery efforts will trump deficit concerns when he takes office in January. Yet he pledged a "page-by-page, line-by-line" budget review to root out unneeded spending.

Obama set no goals for reducing the federal deficit — now in record territory and headed ever higher — an obvious contrast to Monday's announcement that he hopes to create a recession-busting 2.5 million jobs by 2010.

He spoke as he appointed Peter Orszag, currently head of the Congressional Budget Office, to be his own budget director.

Obama's comments came at his second news conference in as many days, an unusual pre-inaugural burst of activity that he said reflected "the extraordinary circumstances" he will inherit on Jan. 20.

Obama's promise to be careful with a federal buck was placed in a larger context.

"As soon as the recovery is well under way, we need to set up a long-term plan to reduce the structural deficit and make sure we are not leaving a mountain of debt for the next generation," he said.

The picture took on troubling dimensions before he spoke, when the Commerce Department reported U.S. economic activity declined at a rate of 0.5 per cent in the three months ending in September.

Further underscoring weakness, Americans' disposable income fell at an annual rate of 9.2 per cent in the same period, the largest drop in records that date to 1947.

THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

Deficit certain to soar

- The federal budget deficit was a record $455 billion US for the fiscal year that ended on Sept. 30, and is certain to be higher this year — possibly reaching $1 trillion — as the costs of a financial bailout and an economic stimulus are piled on top of smaller-than-expected tax receipts.

Karzai calls for timeline to end war

AFGHANISTAN President Hamid Karzai told a visiting United Nations Security Council delegation yesterday the international community should set a timeline to end the war in Afghanistan.

It appeared to be the first time Karzai has called for such a deadline to defeat Taliban militants and raise a stable and competent Afghan security establishment.

"If there is no deadline, we have the right to find another solution for peace and security, which is negotiations," Karzai was quoted as saying in a statement from his office.

"If there is no deadline, we have the right to find another solution for peace and security, which is negotiations."
Hamid Karzai

Karzai didn't specify when he wants the deadline set by.

The United States has some 32,000 troops in the country, but U.S. military leaders say up to 20,000 more soldiers could be sent to Afghanistan next year.

Canada has some 2,500 soldiers in the country.

THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

Space station repairs paying off

SUCCESS Astronauts who recently made repairs to the International Space Station got a double dose of good news yesterday: A rotary joint that they spent days cleaning and lubing appeared to be working normally again for the first time in more than a year, and a urine-recycling machine finally was behaving.

THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

Susan Rice leading race to be U.S. ambassador to UN

POLITICS Susan Rice, a Barack Obama confidant and the spouse of a Canadian journalist, is reportedly the president-elect's leading candidate for U.S. ambassador to the United Nations.

ABC News reports that an announcement on Rice will come after this week's Thanksgiving holiday.

The network appears to have an inside track on the story — Rice's husband, one-time CBC producer Ian Cameron, is the executive producer of ABC's This Week With George Stephanopoulos, based in Washington.

Reports of her appointment have been circulating in recent days.

THE CANADIAN PRESS

Background

- Susan Rice, 44, was once a member of former president Bill Clinton's National Security Council and the assistant secretary of state for African Affairs under Madeleine Albright.

Greenhouse gases at new record highs: UN

ENVIRONMENT The United Nations weather agency says the three main greenhouse gases in the Earth's atmosphere have reached new record highs.

Geir Braathen of the World Meteorological Organization says carbon dioxide was up the most in 2007 by 1.5 per cent, with methane and nitrous oxide rising by lesser amounts.

Braathen says that it was the first time in a decade that the concentration of methane in the atmosphere has increased.

He said yesterday that it is too soon to say what caused the increases.

A UN panel has warned that continued increases will have catastrophic consequences on the Earth, such as severe droughts and floods.

THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

Gas sources

- The gases are produced partially by natural sources, like wetlands, and partially by human activities such as fertilizer use or fuel combustion.

Woman in Spitzer scandal sentenced

JUSTICE Tanya Hollander of Rhinebeck, N.Y., who was accused of helping arrange trysts between escorts and their customers, has been sentenced to one year of probation for her role in the prostitution scandal that brought down then-New York governor Eliot Spitzer. Hollander pleaded guilty Aug. 25 to conspiracy to violate the travel act.

THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

Michigan police find three missing girls safe, father detained

Police in Michigan say three young girls missing since their mother was found dead at their home have been found safe. They were with their father, 35-year-old Jose Olguin, who's now in custody. THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

Pirates move Saudi oil tanker

Pirates have moved a Saudi supertanker loaded with crude oil farther out to sea after an extremist Islamic group vowed to fight the bandits because they seized a Muslim-owned vessel, witnesses said yesterday.

Somali pirates seized the Sirius Star on Nov. 15 in their most audacious hijacking to date off the coast of the lawless country. The vessel is carrying two million barrels of crude worth about $100 million US.

The BBC reported yesterday that they contacted a pirate on board the Sirius Star who said the ship owner has not contacted them and that they have not yet set a ransom.

The BBC said the pirate identified himself as Daybad.

The captain of the Sirius Star, Marek Nishky, told the BBC he and his crew have no complaint and have been allowed to talk to their families.

On Friday, al-Shabab — the Islamic group at the centre of Somalia's deadly insurgency — vowed to fight the pirates.

Somali clan elder Abdisalan Khalif Ahmed said the ship was moved on Sunday to about 45 km from its earlier location, putting it about 50 km off the coastal village of Harardhere.

THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

Ohio **Deer on the loose**

MARSHALL GORBY/THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

A deer attempts to ram a vehicle in Springfield, Ohio yesterday. The animal had been ramming a house and was Tasered by police and euthanized.

Suez Canal feels the heat as piracy spikes in Gulf of Aden

EGYPT The Suez Canal, a vital shortcut between East and West for nearly 140 years, is facing an enormous challenge as the scourge of Somali piracy in the Gulf of Aden prompts major shipping companies to seek another route.

Egypt, which is heavily dependent on the fees it charges ships to go through the canal, has expressed concern over a possible drop in income — though it says it's hopeful an international flotilla patrolling the pirate-infested waters will be able to ensure safe passage.

"For sure it will have a bad effect" if it continues, Gen. Ahmed Fadel, head of the Suez Canal Authority, told the Associated Press on Monday at his office overlooking the canal.

THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

Losing business

- At least two shipping companies have announced their vessels will take the long route around the southern tip of Africa rather than go through the canal, which requires crossing through the Gulf of Aden, the scene of most pirate attacks.

72 dead in Brazilian flooding

DEATHS Rescue workers desperately digging through the wreckage of homes engulfed by mudslides found more bodies yesterday in southern Brazil, raising the death toll from rain-spawned floods and hillside collapses to 72.

Most of the dead were killed in mudslides that swept away homes and businesses, and nearly 54,000 were displaced, civil defence officials said in a statement.

Eight cities remained isolated and were running short of everything from drinking water to fuel because of the rains that caused rivers to overflow their banks. THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

Still missing

- As many as 30 people were still missing in small cities and towns across Santa Catarina state, where torrential rains surpassed records going back to 1961.

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Briton gets life for raping and impregnating his 2 daughters
A British court has sentenced a man who repeatedly raped his two daughters over more than 25 years to life in prison. The court found that the 56-year-old man subjected his daughters to years of abuse and impregnated them 19 times. They bore him nine children, two of whom died at birth. THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

Death sentence upheld in China

Man convicted of stabbing, killing six police officers

China's highest court has upheld the death sentence for a man convicted of killing six Shanghai policemen in a case that drew broad public sympathy for the killer.

Yang Jia was 28 and unemployed when he forced his way into a Shanghai police station July 1 and stabbed six officers to death. He was convicted in all six killings.

China's Supreme People's Court informed Yang's family yesterday a review of the case was complete and the death sentence would be upheld, said Beijing lawyer Liu Xiaoyuan.

"From what I understand, (the execution) could be as soon as (today), but we don't know," said Liu, who did not represent Yang during his trial but serves as lawyer for Yang's mother in a separate case.

"From what I understand, (the execution) could be as soon as (today), but we don't know."
Liu Xiaoyuan

The court made its decision Friday, Liu said.

Popular support for Yang swelled after news media reported he told police the attack was revenge for torture he allegedly suffered previously while being questioned by police about a stolen bicycle.

Yang tried to sue the police for psychological damage but the claim was rejected. THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

Aubry confirmed as French Socialist party leader

FRANCE Martine Aubry, a former labour minister who brought France the 35-hour work week, was confirmed yesterday as the leader of the opposition Socialist party after a bruising and razor-thin contest with her rival.

The result hands Aubry the task of patching up soured relations within the party — the main opposition to President Nicolas Sarkozy's conservatives — and restoring a public image battered by the fighting with former Socialist presidential nominee Segolene Royal for the leadership.

"Let us rally, let us unite around a line of the left, but also around an upcoming renewal."
Martine Aubry

"Let us rally, let us unite around a line of the left, but also around an upcoming renewal," Aubry said.

The vote Friday at first showed Aubry winning with a 42-vote margin — among nearly 135,000 cast by party rank-and-file. Royal's supporters claimed voting irregularities and demanded a recount, so the party carried out a two-day review — only to announce yesterday that Aubry in fact won by 102 votes. THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

Jail time dropped in Dubai beach sex trial

CRIME The Dubai Court of Appeals has upheld the guilty verdicts against a British couple convicted of having sex on a beach, but it said the couple will not have to go to prison.

The two had been sentenced to three months in prison each after they were convicted in October of having sex outside of marriage, public indecency and drunkenness.

Yesterday, the three-judge panel suspended their prison sentences. But it said the two must still be deported from the United Arab Emirates and each pay a fine of about $272.

Last week, the pair admitted in court that they were drunk when they were arrested over the summer, but they denied having sex on the beach.
THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

Church shooting suspect to return to New Jersey

DEATHS A California man accused of fatally shooting his estranged wife and another man in a New Jersey church Sunday had been renting a room a few kilometres away for two weeks beforehand, authorities said yesterday.

The accused gunman, 27-year-old Joseph Pallipurath, will soon return to New Jersey after waiving his right to extradition in Georgia, where he was arrested Monday at a motel.

The Sacramento, Calif., man is suspected of shooting and killing his wife, 24-year-old Reshma James, inside the St. Thomas Syrian Orthodox Knanaya Church in Clifton, a suburb about 25 kilometres west of Manhattan. Also killed was Dennis John Mallosseril, who witnesses said tried to intervene and break up the rampage.

James's 47-year-old cousin, Silvy Perincheril, was shot in the head and remains hospitalized in critical condition. James had taken out a restraining order against Pallipurath, prosecutors said.
THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

Arrest details

- Pallipurath was arrested Monday night in Monroe, 65 kilometres east of Atlanta, after police received a tip that he was in the area.

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Comment & Views

Comment

Moon's spin on hate

Professor recommends repealing section of rights act

TheWestView

Paul Sullivan
Journalist & media consultant

My hero is a guy called Richard Moon. Other people have their Sidney Crosbys or Beyoncés, but I want Richard Moon's autograph. I'm thinking of mounting his picture on my office wall. He's the man.

Who, you ask, is Richard Moon? Well, he's a professor at the University of Windsor who has written a report, released this week, recommending that the Canadian Human Rights Commission no longer investigate complaints relating to hate speech.

Who cares about that, you snort? You should, as the Human Rights Commission and all its little provincial sprouts make it their business to monitor your every thought, word and deed and decide whether or not you're playing by the rules.

The only problem is the commissions make the rules with zero input from me or you and they have a tendency to get zealous in their defence of the allegedly offended.

I've already written here about the sad case of Mark Steyn, the neo-conservative Maclean's journalist who was dragged through an interminable investigation hosted by the B.C. Human Rights Commission for the crime of writing a peevish piece about Islam, only after the determined complainant was turned down by the Canadian and Ontario commissions.

But not before the heads of both the CHRC and its Ontario counterpart, Jennifer Lynch and Barbara Hall, respectively, took public shots at Steyn. Even if they reluctantly concluded that they had no jurisdiction in the matter, they couldn't resist using their bully pulpits to bring him down a peg.

"Even if they reluctantly concluded that they had no jurisdiction in the matter, they couldn't resist using their bully pulpits to bring him down a peg."

Who do they think they are, journalists?

Anyway, my new hero was commissioned to write a report in the wake of the Steyn furor, and I bet it spoiled more than one bureaucrat's day as his principle recommendation is to repeal the section of the Canadian Human Rights Act, Section 13, dealing with hate speech.

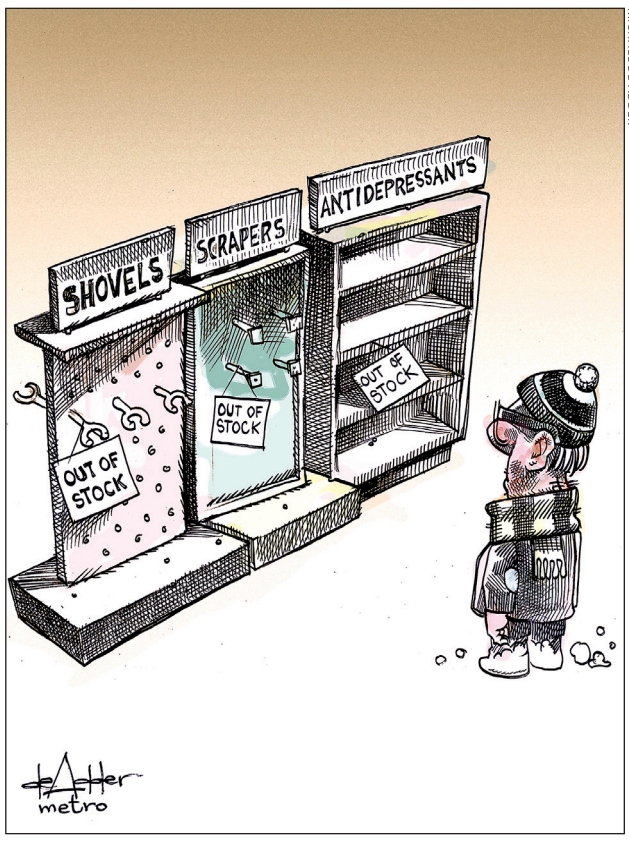
He was quick to point out we already have plenty of protection against hate speech. It's called the Criminal Code of Canada, which bans the willful promotion of hate. But that's not enough for the thought police, who have duplicated these provisions ad nauseam across the country, just in case someone has an errant thought.

But in this social networking age, every errant thought is posted on the Internet and the thought police are wearing themselves ragged trying to stem the tide.

So instead of trying to shut down hate-filled stupidity wherever it rears its head, destroying free and honest expression in the process, Moon offers the following common sense approach: "Find ways other than censorship to respond to expression that stereotypes and defames." Argument, debate, discussion, dialogue: Whatever you want to call it, it beats the kind of kangaroo court justice practised by human rights commissions.

Now, let's just hope someone doesn't complain to the human rights commission about Richard Moon.

Paul Sullivan is a Vancouver-based journalist and owner of Sullivan Media Consulting.



MICHAEL DE ADDER

Word on the street: Do you think the North American auto industry deserves a government bailout?

Brennan McEachran
age 18, Toronto
A: They don't deserve one. Whether or not they'll get one is a different story. If they do or if they don't, pensions will still be at stake.

Kelly Hoskins
age 29, Toronto
A: Yes. The reason for that is the government is implicit in the state of the economy.

Mike Haddad
age 22, Toronto
A: No. They're hoping that billions of dollars will do what hundreds of millions hasn't already done. It's so crazy.

Miriam Beach
age 35, St. Margarets Bay, N.S.
A: The workers deserve it, but not the owners of the auto industry.

Steven Sunshine
age 24, Vancouver
A: No. I think the money should go to better things — like health care or housing.

metro life panel

Metro Life Panel

Results from the Canadian Metro Life Panel (441 respondents):

Yes: 19.8%
No: 68.3 %
Don't know: 11.9 %

Letters

Band-Aid alternatives end up costing more for transit

Last week an article appeared in Metro indicating that plans were being made for the development of extending the Yonge Subway north past Highway 7. In the Nov. 24 paper an article stated that digging for the city's first proposed "Transit City" line along Sheppard East will begin next September. Why Sheppard East?

While both of these transit extensions are important, they are not the most dominant transit route extensions that have been discussed and negotiated over the past 10 to 15 years.

What has/is happening with the extension of the Sheppard subway line north, for which government funding was supposed to have been approved?

Where does the city's transit priorities start? It seems the Toronto Transit Commission is constantly in dire need for funds. It needs new vehicles, new subway lines, improvements to subway stations, more rapid transit, etc. Why doesn't the TTC achieve/complete one major objective before trying to tackle three or four other things at the same time?

Having a long-term plan is vital, but equally important is being able to set priorities and being able to maintain them on schedule. Using Band-Aid alternatives ultimately winds up costing more, and doesn't achieve the desired need.

GERALD LEVINE, TORONTO

Canadian economy may be scary, but cartoon wasn't

What a racist comic depiction in Metro (Nov. 20) of Gov. Gen. Michaëlle Jean portrayed as a "spook."

Sure, the Canadian economic forecast is "scary" and Stephen Harper has vague plans on responding to the challenge, but Michael de Adder's attempt at satire scraped the bottom of the barrel with this one. Not funny!

DIANNE WEDDERBURN, HALIFAX

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Letters must include sender's full name, address and phone number – street name and phone numbers will NOT be published. **We reserve the right to edit letters.**

Canadians shop more than expected
Canadians, in September, racked up the biggest monthly retail bill since January. Statistics Canada said September retail sales came in at $36.3 billion, up 1.1 per cent from August, driven by a 2.9 per cent increase in new car sales. THE CANADIAN PRESS

Business

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OIL $50.77 US | $3.73

EDITOR: FERMIN DESOUZA, FERMIN.DESOUZA@METRONEWS.CA

Dodge backs deficit

Canada should pull itself out of the global economic downturn by investing in public works, says David Dodge, the former governor of the Bank of Canada.

Governments should move to kick-start the economy and create jobs, even if it means running a deficit that will have to paid back in better times, he said.

"It is a good time to build those bridges, build those roads, which, by policy, we neglected in the 1990s because we were broke," said Dodge, who stepped down as head of the central bank in January.

"It is a good time to build those bridges, build those roads, which, by policy, we neglected in the 1990s because we were broke." David Dodge

Dodge warned that pulling out of the recession will be a painful process both for business and consumers. Banks and mortgage lenders contributed to the current crisis through reckless lending dominated by a short-term "traders" mentality, he said.

"We are going to have to tighten our belts collectively — here in Canada, but in particular in the United States — and that is going to be very difficult for the incoming administration in the United States."

THE CANADIAN PRESS

More Canadians get EI: StatsCan

JOBLESS The number of Canadians receiving Employment Insurance benefits rose 3.9 per cent to 480,370 in September from a year earlier, Statistics Canada says.

THE CANADIAN PRESS

BMO profit up 24% to $560M

BANKING The Bank of Montreal has reported a 24 per cent increase in fourth-quarter net income to $560 million. BMO shares dropped 87 cents to $33.25. THE CANADIAN PRESS

Business in brief

E-MAILS Both Future Shop and Best Buy Canada said yesterday e-mails being circulated that the retail chains are closing and that its gift cards are not valid are false. The e-mails also falsely say both are owned by Circuit City. THE CANADIAN PRESS

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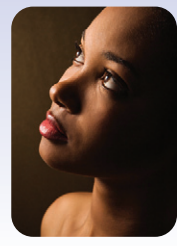
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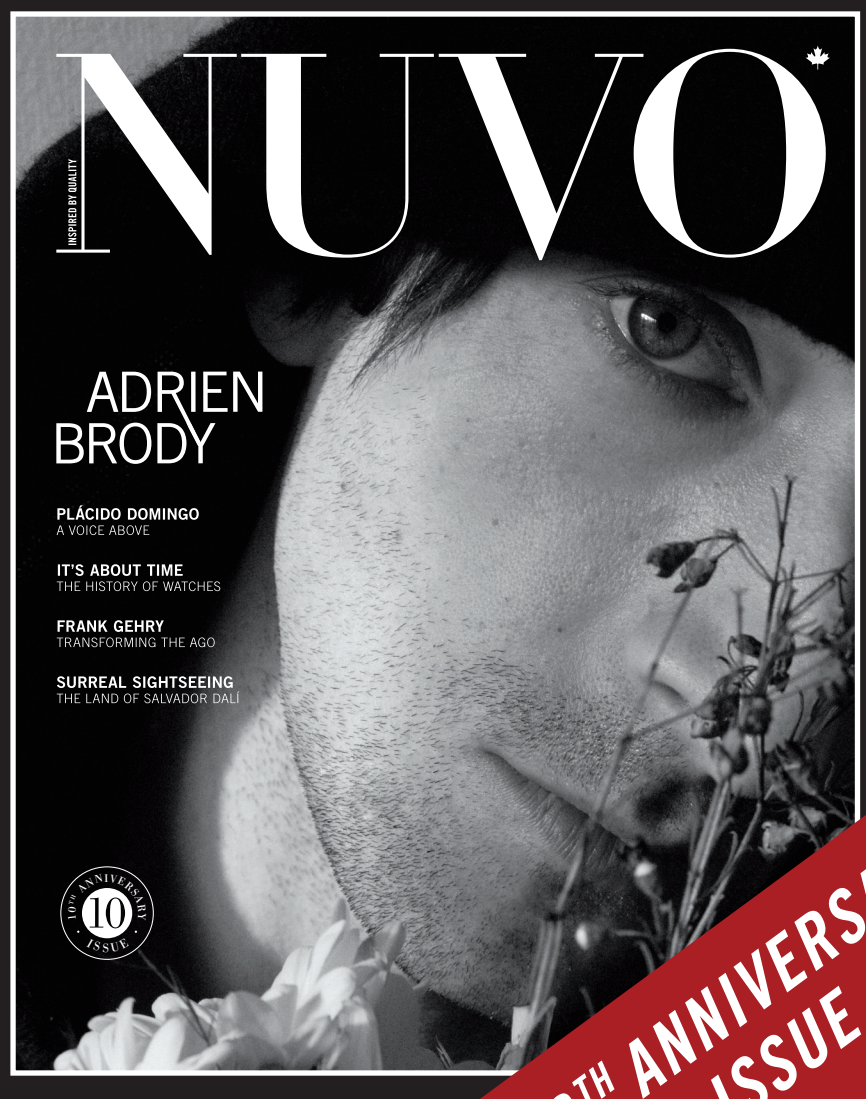

CRTC approves radio station swap

The Canadian Radio-television and Telecommunications Commission has approved Newfoundland Capital Corp. trading its CFDR radio station in Halifax to Rogers Communications, in exchange for CIGM in Sudbury, Ont., and $5 million. THE CANADIAN PRESS

U.S. offers new loans

The U.S. government unveiled two new programs yesterday that will provide $800 billion US to try to help unfreeze the market for consumer debt from home mortgages to credit cards.

Treasury Secretary Henry Paulson has been criticized for continually revising the focus of the government's response to the crisis. Paulson yesterday defended all the changes, saying there was no one response adequate by itself to deal with what he termed a once- or twice-in-a-century financial crisis. He said that was why the government was repeatedly modifying its response.

Weak GDP

- Data released yesterday showed gross domestic product shrank at a 0.5 per cent rate in the July-September quarter, weaker than the 0.3 per cent rate of decline first estimated a month ago, and the worst showing since the third quarter of 2001.

To try to increase the availability of home loans to borrowers, the Federal Reserve said it will buy up to $100 billion US in direct obligations from mortgage giants Fannie Mae and Freddie Mac as well as the Federal Home Loan Banks.

The Federal Reserve, which is the U.S. central bank, also will buy $500 billion US in mortgage-backed securities, pools of mortgages that are bundled together and sold to investors.

The program on consumer debt will lend up to $200 billion to the holders of securities backed by various types of consumer loans. It will be supported by $20 billion of credit protection from the $700-billion bailout package that was enacted last month.

The government, while looking to reduce fear in the credit markets, is eager to see lenders resume more normal levels of lending to help stimulate the economy. Since September, when credit markets first froze, financial institutions have been hesitant to hand over money for fear they won't be repaid. THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

B.C. seeking federal bailout for forest industry

British Columbia's forests minister is warning the federal government to look beyond the struggling auto industry and consider the province's forestry sector when it comes to government bailouts.

Pat Bell said forest industry revenues this year are the worst ever and the sector has been hurting for at least two years.

"We're anticipating forest revenues to be in the range of $600 million this year," he said. "In a very good year it could be $1.2 billion, typically it averages at around $1 billion."

Bell said Ottawa should consider a broad-based economic initiative that supports all industries.

THE CANADIAN PRESS

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U.S. releases discouraging data

U.S. ECONOMY The U.S. government released a triple dose of discouraging data yesterday: The economy shrank over the summer even more than previously believed, and consumers cut spending by the largest amount in 28 years. During the same period, home prices fell to levels not seen since early 2004.

But Wall Street barely flinched. The Dow Jones industrials closed up 36 points after investors were heartened by government plans to aid consumer lending.

THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

GM extends S.Korea shutdown

VEHICLES The South Korean unit of General Motors Corp. said yesterday it will extend a planned production shutdown due to weakening demand for autos overseas.

Production at GM Daewoo Auto & Technology Co.'s No. 2 plant in the city of Bupyeong, near Seoul, will cease from Dec. 1 until Jan. 4.

GM Daewoo had earlier said the plant, along with three others in South Korea, would close down from Dec. 22 until Jan. 4.

THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

British mortgage lending halved

REAL ESTATE Mortgage lending in Britain has more than halved over the past year, says the British Banker's Association. The number of new home mortgages approved in Britain was 52 per cent lower in October than in the same month a year earlier.

Banks have tightened up on lending, requiring larger deposits and higher rates of interest, which have frozen many potential buyers out. That has added to pressure on house prices, which have fallen 10 per cent in the last year. THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

Business in brief

MERGER Canwest Global Communications Corp. announced yesterday it will unite its publishing and broadcast digital teams under the leadership of Graham Moysey. Canwest announced earlier this month it will cut 560 jobs, or about 5 per cent of its workforce, as it struggles with a rougher economy and stiffer competition.

MUSIC Warner Music Group, whose artists include Linkin Park and Madonna, says fourth-quarter profit climbed 20 per cent to $6 million US — from $5 million — helped by lower income tax expense and increased digital revenue. New York-based Warner says revenue slipped 2 per cent to $854 million as consumers shifted toward digital music.

VIDEO Blockbuster Inc. will start renting movies and television shows in the U.S. through a new gadget that may give consumers another reason to bypass the struggling video chain's 7,500 stores. The new system announced yesterday relies on a small box that connects to television sets and stores video after it's downloaded over high-speed Internet connections. The player is built on the same concept as storage devices made by Apple Inc. METRO NEWS SERVICES

Utley has surgery
Philadelphia Phillies second baseman Chase Utley had arthroscopic hip surgery Monday and is expected to need four to six months to recover. METRO NEWS SERVICES

Sports

"He's a walking train wreck, and unfortunately people turn their heads to watch a train wreck."

Golfer Stuart Appleby, left, about John Daly, right, on what he believes is the reason for Daly's invitation to the Australian Masters tournament. SOURCE: ESPN

SPORTS@METRONEWS.CA

Burke all but signed

Brian Burke will have a formal contract offer from the Maple Leafs in his hands today and he's just a signature from becoming the team's president and general manager.

Considering that the term and financial compensation have already been agreed, acceptance of the deal is a formality and the Burke era in Toronto will begin with that autograph. It's anticipated that the 53-year-old Burke will be introduced as the Leafs' head of all things hockey on Saturday.

Burke's deal will include the rest of this season, then a five-year contract that kicks in next season. He made about $1.4 million (U.S.) managing the Anaheim Ducks and is expected to have his salary doubled by the Leafs.

Burke was willing to sign a contract last week, but the Leafs dictated the pace of these negotiations, the bulk of which were conducted mostly by email and telephone between lawyer Gord Kirke, representing the Leafs, and Burke's Vancouver-based lawyer, Peter Gall. Among the last details to be worked out centred around the chain of command within Toronto's front office and the management structure. There was a question as to whether Burke would report directly to the MLSE board on a regular basis, or to a senior executive, such as MLSE President Richard Peddie.

That, it is believed, was not a sticking point or a worry to Burke since he had to "manage up" during his days running the Canucks and Ducks. Dave Nonis, the former Vancouver GM, is expected to be announced as a new member of the Leafs' front office at the same time as Burke is introduced.

TORSTAR NEWS SERVICE

First American

- Born in Providence, R.I., Burke will become the first American to be GM of the Maple Leafs. His college pal is head coach Ron Wilson.

Leafs Stempniak makes debut

THE CANADIAN PRESS/NATHAN DENETTE

Newly acquired Maple Leafs forward Lee Stempniak skates last night against the Atlanta Thrashers. For a complete game recap, visit www.metronews.ca/sports.

Donors step up where governments have failed our athletes

VANCOUVER 2010 Games

If Helen Upperton's bobsled had wheels, they'd have been spinning.

The promising young pilot was stuck in a rut: fourth at the 2006 Turin Olympics; five fourth-place finishes on the World Cup circuit the following season. She knew her driving was improving, even if the results didn't show it. She also knew she needed a new sled, so she committed herself to doing whatever it took to buy one.

It turned out to be a lot easier than she expected.

That summer she hooked up with an outfit called B2ten, a group of well-heeled Canadian businessmen who have pooled about $2 million together to provide Olympians with the extras that could produce a medal at the 2010 Vancouver Games — no strings attached.

It's not a blank cheque. In fact, the athletes don't get any cash. The program provides services and goods to try to complement what already exists and generally recruits athletes who are on the cusp of an international breakthrough but might be short of resources. "They said, 'You tell us what you need and we'll make sure you have it,'" said world champion speed skater Denny Morrison, a B2ten member.

HIGHPERFORMANCESPORT.COM PHOTO

Canadian athletes involved in the B2ten program look for the winning recipe with chef Matthew Schnarch, far right, during a retreat last year. From left are cross-country skier Alex Harvey, hockey goalie Kim St. Pierre, bobsledder Helen Upperton, skeleton racer Jeff Pain and moguls skier Stephanie St. Pierre.

Among the other 16 winter athletes in the program are Olympic moguls champion Jennifer Heil, Olympic skeleton silver medallist Jeff Pain, Team Canada hockey goaltender Kim St. Pierre, long-track speed skater Christine Nesbitt and short-track speed skater Francois-Louis Tremblay.

Upperton has been one of the major beneficiaries because of the equipment needs in her sport. B2ten has invested well over $100,000 in buying her a sled from the Monaco federation, several sets of steel runners, plus support to help her adapt to the new sled. The help hasn't stopped there. Upperton said B2ten has provided mentoring, advice on team management and dealing with sports politics, access to top athletic trainers like Scott Livingston of the Montreal Canadiens, osteopaths, sports psychologists and a lot more.

The donors appear to be in it truly to help the athletes, getting nothing tangible in return but a tax receipt.

"There's no quid pro quo, it's not a marketing type thing, our name isn't on helmets or anything like that," said Barry Heck, a Calgary merchant banker who heads up the western investors.

But Heck said they share a feeling that Canada should be doing a lot better on the international stage but is hurt by abysmal resources.

He said they like the fact the organization is private, there's no politics and not a nickel is spent on administration because all the time is donated. "The athletes are not making money doing it; quite the opposite," he said.

"The passion and dedication that they show, I tell you if that doesn't inspire you as a Canadian or a parent or an individual, I don't know what else can. It really chokes you up. It does."

B2ten happened by accident. It all started with Jenn Heil. Her coach and boyfriend Dominick Gauthier enlisted the help of Montreal businessman J.D. Miller in building a team of experts and financial backers around Heil that helped boost her to Olympic gold at the 2006 Turin Games. Heil lived with the Miller family for the four years leading to the Olympics. The more money Miller raised through his business connections across the country, the more athletes they added.

Claire Angus Caplan of Toronto and her husband, Mark Caplan, were among those recruited by Miller. They became so enamoured with the character of the women's bobsledders that they're now involved in filming a documentary of their Olympic journey. Angus Caplan believes it's the moral support as much as the financial that lifts the athletes.

"Financial is one thing, but I think it's also seeing that people actually give a crap. It really helps inspire them that someone does care."

TORSTAR NEWS SERVICE

On the web

B2ten
- For more information about the B2ten program that assists Canadian Olympians, visit b2ten.com.

Alexander cut by Redskins

Former NFL MVP Shaun Alexander was released by the Washington Redskins yesterday after getting only 11 carries in five games. Alexander was looking to make a comeback after foot and wrist injuries ruined his last two seasons and prompted the Seattle Seahawks to cut him in April. METRO NEWS SERVICES

O'Neal's status uncertain, 'not worried' about knee

Moments before Jermaine O'Neal crashed to the floor injuring his knee against the New Jersey Nets last Friday, he was sitting on the Toronto Raptors bench and staring at his cumbersome knee brace, trying to decide whether he should put it on.

He figures that brace saved his season. "God is good," O'Neal said. "We talked about it, the training staff and the doctors, and I probably would have been done for the year if I hadn't had the brace on."

O'Neal didn't practise yesterday, and is uncertain whether he'll play tonight when the Raptors host the Charlotte Bobcats.

The 6-foot-11 centre has worn a brace religiously since having surgery to repair the left knee that kept him out of 42 games in Indiana last season. The strap kept coming undone Friday night and he ended up playing most of the third quarter without it before a trainer brought him another one before the start of the fourth.

"I looked at the brace for 50 straight seconds, I just looked at it and I wasn't going to put it on, then I said, you know what, I'll put it on, and as soon as I got back in the game, I hurt my knee." O'Neal strained his knee in the first minute of the fourth quarter when he was dragged down from behind by New Jersey's Sean Williams, and felt the stabilizing parts on either side of the brace straining under his weight as he fell.

"If that part's not there, I probably tear every ligament in my knee," O'Neal said. "I felt pretty lucky about the situation. You probably won't see me out there without it anymore."

O'Neal started Sunday against Boston just two days after playing the Nets, but lasted just 14 minutes. He also hurt his ankle in that game when he came down awkwardly on the foot of a Celtics player, and insisted it's his ankle that's keeping him off the court now, not his knee.

"I'm not worried at all about the knee, the knee looks really good, no swelling," he said, tugging up the leg of his sweatpants to show reporters.

"For everybody out there that's wondering about the knee, the knee is great.

"The ankle's a little fat right now, but it's coming along."

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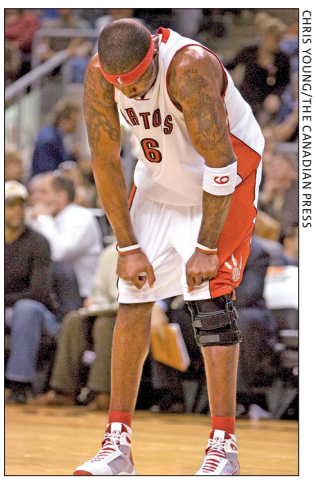

CHRIS YOUNG/THE CANADIAN PRESS

Jermaine O'Neal reacts after tweaking his left knee Sunday against Boston.

The Bobcats' top scorer Jason Richardson practised yesterday for the first time since undergoing arthroscopic knee surgery and could play tonight in Toronto. THE CANADIAN PRESS

Sports in brief

FOOTBALL Michael Vick pleaded guilty to a state dogfighting charge yesterday, and a Virginia judge accepted the deal and gave Vick a suspended three-year sentence — far less than the maximum 10-year term he could have faced. The move clears the way for Vick's possible transition to a halfway house, and brings his aim of another chance at pro football closer.

NHL Mike Sullivan is returning to the Tampa Bay Lightning bench. The NHL team has named him associate coach, a position he held with the Lightning last season. Sullivan will work alongside interim head coach Rick Tocchet, who replaced the fired Barry Melrose earlier this month.

NHL As of yesterday, Montreal Canadiens players led the balloting for all six starting spots on the Eastern Conference team all-star team. Should the numbers hold through the Jan. 2 end of balloting, the Habs would become the first team to have the entire starting lineup elected to an all-star game. METRO NEWS SERVICES

A FEW CHANGES TO GO

STARTING MONDAY, DECEMBER 1, 2008, THERE WILL BE CHANGES TO SOME GO TRAIN AND BUS SERVICES.

Some train times will change due to the construction of a new train underpass under CP's freight line, west of the Bloor GO Station on our Georgetown line. Once completed in mid-2010, the underpass will allow for more frequent GO Train service and improved reliability.

31 – GEORGETOWN GO TRAIN & BUS SERVICE

The weekday westbound train departing Union Station at 9:30 a.m. to Bramalea GO Station will now depart at 9:40 and times will be 10 minutes later at all stops along the route.

The weekday westbound train departing Union Station at 3:10 p.m. to Brampton GO Station will now depart at 2:45 and times will be 25 minutes earlier at all stops along the route. Bus connections to Georgetown and Guelph are available.

The weekday eastbound train departing Bramalea at 9:05 a.m. will now depart at 9:20 and times will be 15 minutes later at all stops along the route.

The weekday eastbound train departing Bramalea at 10:15 a.m. will now depart at 10:25 and times will be 10 minutes later at all stops along the route.

Buses that connect to the adjusted train trips above will also have time changes, so be sure to check the new schedule.

32 – BRAMPTON TRINITY COMMON GO BUS SERVICE

The wait time for train service at Bramalea GO Station will be a little longer from bus trips departing Hurontario & Bovaird at 8:10 a.m. and 9:30, Trinity Common at 8:22 and 9:38, and Bramalea City Centre at 8:37 and 9:50 a.m., due to the adjusted train times. Contact Brampton Transit at 905-874-2999 for local bus options.

37 – ORANGEVILLE GO BUS SERVICE

The weekday northbound trip departing Bramalea at 10:10 a.m. will now depart at 10:20 and times will be 10 minutes later at all stops along the route.

The weekday northbound trip departing Brampton at 4:00 p.m. will now depart at 3:35 and times will be 25 minutes earlier at all stops along the route.

The weekday southbound trip departing Orangeville Mall at 7:24 a.m. will now depart at 7:39 and times will be 15 minutes later at all stops along the route.

38 – BOLTON-HWY. 50 GO BUS SERVICE

Weekday southbound trips departing Bolton (Hwy. 50 & Columbia Way) at 8:15 and 9:35 a.m. will now depart at 8:25 and 9:45. Times will be 10 minutes later at all stops along the route.

The weekday northbound trip departing Malton GO Station at 10:03 a.m. will now depart at 10:13 and times will be 10 minutes later at all stops along the route.

The weekday northbound trip departing Malton at 3:43 p.m. will now depart at 3:18 and times will be 25 minutes earlier at all stops along the route.

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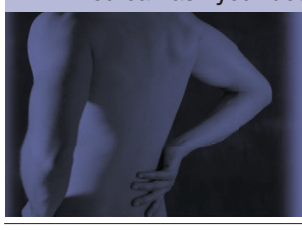

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Limniatis going to Soccer Hall
John Limniatis, who played 44 times for Canada and currently coaches the Montreal Impact, is headed to the Canadian Soccer Hall of Fame. Limniatis will be joined in the Class of 2009 in the player category by fellow Canadian internationals Mike Stojanovic, Neil Ellett and Joan McEachern. **THE CANADIAN PRESS**

Man U, Real, Bayern charge into Champions' 16

Defending champion Manchester United led a sweep of seven more teams into the last 16 of the Champions League yesterday after a 0-0 draw with Villarreal.

Nine-time winner Real Madrid, four-time champion Bayern Munich, two-time winner FC Porto, Lyon, Arsenal and Villarreal also advanced to the knockout phase with a game to spare. That means 10 have already made it with Juventus, Barcelona and Sporting Lisbon also having advanced. Cristiano Ronaldo had a shot pushed onto the crossbar by goalkeeper Diego Lopez but the draw meant that both United and Villareal have nine points at the top of Group E. Even though Aalborg came from behind to beat Celtic 2-1, it only has five points and the Scottish champion has two.

Raul Gonzalez scored Real Madrid's seventh-minute goal in a 1-0 victory at BATE Borisov, which meant it joined already-qualified Juventus from Group H. Nicklas Bendtner's 87th-minute winner for Arsenal secured a 1-0 win over Dynamo Kyiv in Cesc Fabregas' first game as captain, giving the Gunners 11 points as well.

It was a happy ending to a grim few days for the Gunners after former skipper William Gallas' revelations of fallouts between players. Gallas played for the Gunners. FC Porto also made it to the last 16 with a 2-1 victory at Fenerbahce.

THE CANADIAN PRESS

IVAN SEKRETAREV/ASSOCIATED PRESS

Real Madrid's Raul Gonzalez, second left, scores past BATE Borisov's goalkeeper Sergei Veremko yesterday.

Clemens' DNA on samples: Report

BASEBALL Roger Clemens' former trainer gave samples of Clemens' DNA from needles and syringes to federal investigators trying to ascertain whether the star pitcher committed perjury before Congress, two New York newspapers reported Monday. Brian McNamee's lawyers have said the items, when tested, would link Clemens to the use of performance-enhancing drugs. **THE ASSOCIATED PRESS**

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Prefontaine re-signs with Esks

The Edmonton Eskimos have officially re-signed veteran kicker-punter Noel Prefontaine. The deal was first reported earlier this month but wasn't officially announced until yesterday. THE CANADIAN PRESS

DeAngelis could take his leg south next season

Don't be surprised if the CFL's top scorer is kicking around the NFL next season.

Sandro DeAngelis, who connected on five of five field-goal attempts to lead the Calgary Stampeders to the Grey Cup last Sunday, has attracted the interest of dozens of NFL scouts, many of whom attended the CFL's championship game in Montreal. DeAngelis, a 27-year-old native of Niagara Falls, Ont., scored 217 points to finish atop the CFL in the past season.

• In baseball, the Los Angeles Dodgers charged fans $500 US each the other day to take batting practice alongside two of their players. The club collected $125,000 — for itself, not as a fundraiser — from 250 fans who paid the $500 fee in these difficult economic times to swing at a handful of lobs in the Dodgers' batting cage and pose for pictures with their catcher, Ontarian Russell Martin, and outfielder Andre Ethier.

• The Dodgers, incidentally, are trying to re-sign free agent Rafael Furcal, whom the Blue Jays dearly covet for two roles — leadoff hitter and shortstop. The Jays likely won't outbid the Dodgers, San Francisco Giants or Oakland A's ... if the A's successfully lure Furcal, they'll

YorkReport

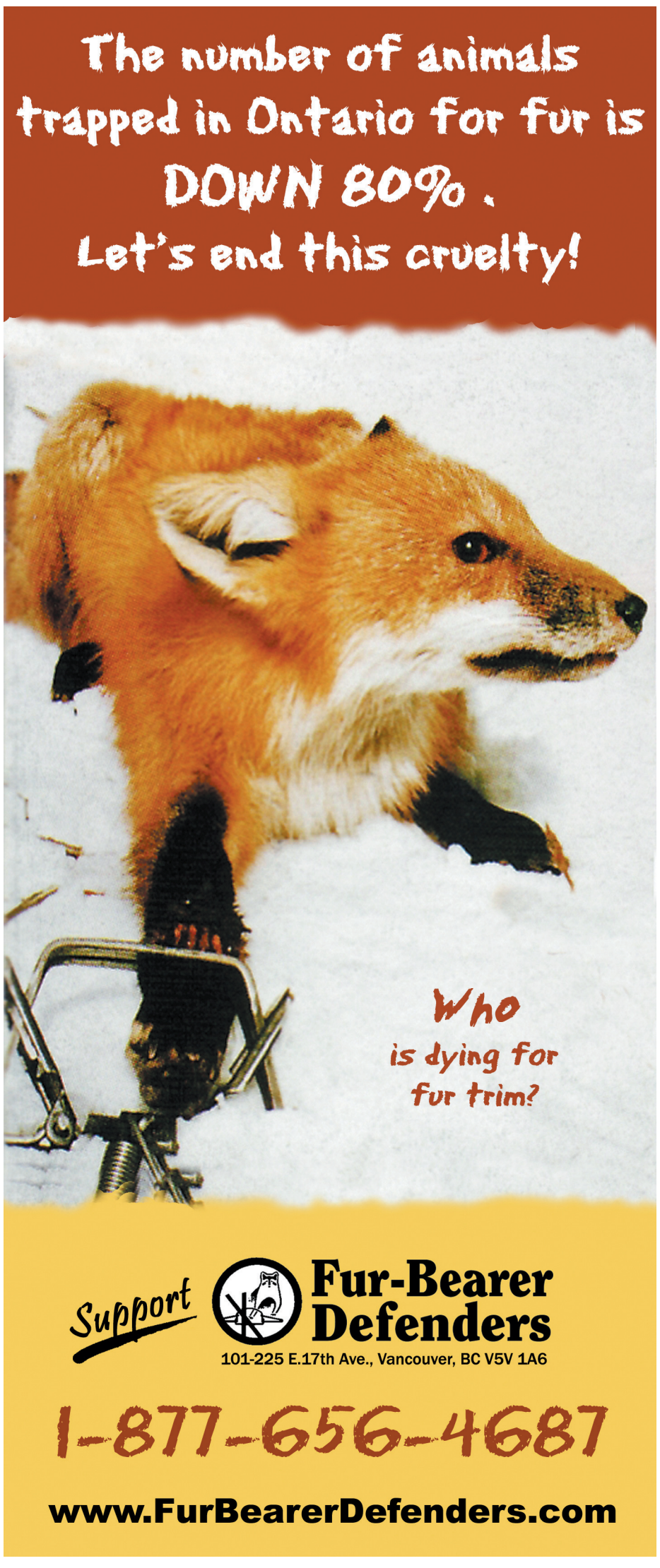
Marty York

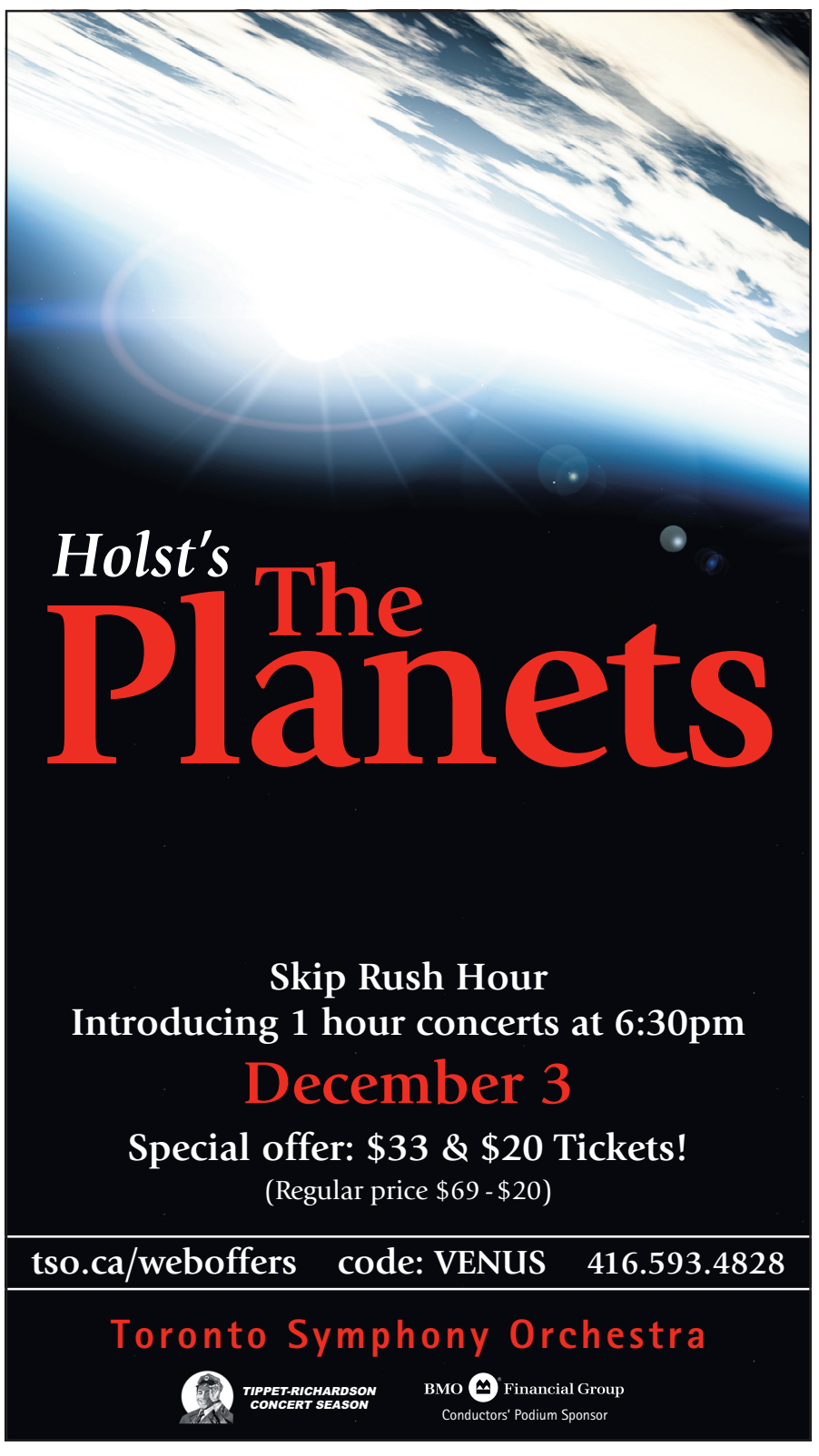
marty.york@metronews.ca

trade shortstop Bobby Crosby — and the Jays already have let Oakland know they're interested. The A's might be willing to pick up part of Crosby's $5.25-million salary ... The Angels won't be re-signing Mark Texeira because the all-star first baseman is seeking a 10-year, megazillion-dollar contract ... I reported here yesterday that C.C. Sabathia would sign a $140-million deal with the Yankees before tomorrow, but the Angels have come in with a late attempt to match the New York offer for the pitching star ... The Jays, meanwhile, continue to pursue slugger Milton Bradley but sources whisper their Plan B for power could be Ken Griffey Jr. ... After recently trading Coco Crisp, the Boston Red Sox have opened negotiations with outfielder Rocco Baldelli, formerly of the Tampa Bay Rays. The Rays likely won't try to retain Baldelli because of his mitochondrial disorder, which often exhausts him during games.

Here's to coaches

• Is there a coach in your community who deserves recognition? If so, check out chunky.tsn.ca to see how you can get them some. Four finalists will be chosen in March and prizes include cash.





Leibovitz in London
Until Feb. 1, 2009, an exhibit of 150 pictures by New York-based photographer Annie Leibovitz will be on display at the National Portrait Gallery. The pictures range from her most celebrated work to intensely private takes. See npg.org.uk/annieleibovitz. METRO WORLD NEWS

Travel

Yotel

Yotel, the airport-based hotel that features "cabins" instead of rooms, has now opened at Amsterdam's Schipol Airport. All 57 cabins boast free WiFi, flat-screen televisions and waterfall-like showers. To celebrate the opening, "Yotellers" will be offered a free bottle of champagne if they make sure they plan a stay before the end of December 2008. For reservations, e-mail customer@yotel.com. METRO WORLD NEWS

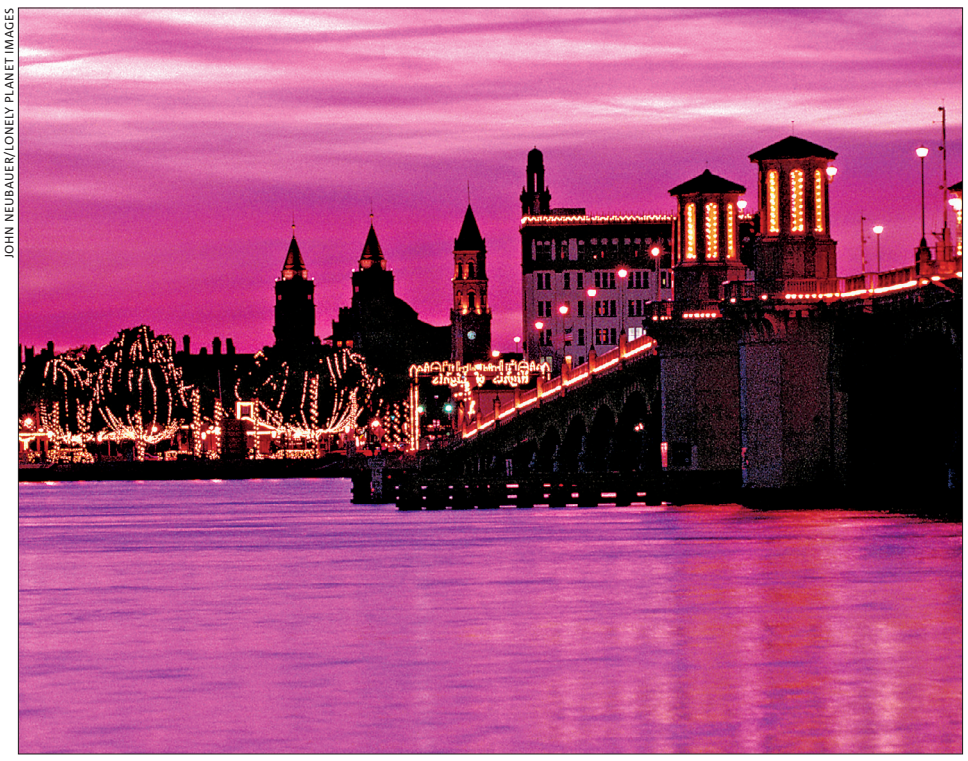
TRAVELDESK@METRONEWS.CA

Taking the road less travelled

Florida's A1A coastal route offers up lots of rewarding discoveries

The next time you're heading for a Florida vacation, take your car and get off the four-lane. Take A1A, the older, slower road that was there before Interstate 95, and explore the towns, beaches and parks along the Atlantic Coast.

JOHN NEUBAUER/LONELY PLANET IMAGES



A view of the Lions Bridge in St. Augustine, Fla., which is lit for Christmas and New Year.

Don't worry, this is not just a string of tourist towns that will slow you down on your way to Miami. There's enough variety in beaches and barrier islands and small-town atmosphere to make some of it part of the National Scenic Byway Program.

When you get to Jacksonville on your way south on I-95, veer left toward the coast and the A1A Scenic & Historic Coastal Byway, byways.org/explore/byways/2477, which runs from Ponte Vedra Beach down the coast past Flagler Beach.

You could cover this stretch of Florida in about an hour in good traffic on I-95 but then you'd miss lots of beach, surf, birdwatching and historic sites. Check out Visitor Services" (rest rooms, camping and plenty of biking and hiking) and "Explore" for history and detail of places along the way. And don't neglect their collection of photos.

One of the main cities along this leg of A1A is also a major East Coast historical site and a great place to visit in its own right. St. Augustine, getaway4florida.com, was the first permanent European city in North America.

See what others think in their "Stories, Photos and Videos" section, and see if "Hot Deals" has anything to help stretch your dollar. Park your car and visit the Colonial Spanish Quarter, historicstaugustine.com, or the nation's Oldest Wooden School House, oldest woodenschoolhouse.com.

St. Augustine also is the home of the World Golf Hall of Fame and the Castillo de San Marcos National Monument, nps.gov/casa, the oldest masonry fort in North America.

About 24 kilometres south of St. Augustine, Fort Matanzas National Monument, nps.gov/foma, is an opportunity to stop and explore this historic fort and its nature trail and beaches.

Pick up some more ideas from Florida's Historic A1A Coastal Scenic Byway, scenica1a.org, which has an interactive map with more detail on boardwalks, parks and preserves. Click on "Scenery" and then look for "watery world" to pick up extra info on beaches and wildlife, and check out "Archaeology" to learn more about the area's history.

One of the attractions along A1A that may have been overshadowed by Florida's big, new theme parks is Marineland, marineland.net, which predates them all, since it was started before World War II as a movie studio. You'll want to either turn down your speakers or click on the tiny "music" icon to hush the dreamy sound track.

Get back on the road and head south to Flagler, visitflagler.org, which boasts of a more relaxed, less developed part of Florida with creeks, 30 kilometres of beach, fishing, canoeing and more golfing than you can probably fit into a short visit. Click on "What to Do" for a search box to help you find details on your preferred activity. Don't go any farther; the same search box has links to restaurants and places to stay. THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

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Dreaming of a white Christmas?
Want a guaranteed white Christmas — in New York City? Irving Berlin's White Christmas is playing at Broadway's Marquis Theatre through Jan. 4. Visit *marquistheatre.com* for more information. **METRO NEWS SERVICES**

A holiday retail adventure in N.Y.C.

Skip the chain retailers and head for the city's one-of-a-kind shops

Some 11 million people visited New York City last year between October and December, according to NYC & Company, the city's marketing and tourism organization. Even if that number drops this year due to the economy, you're likely to find Manhattan plenty crowded over the holidays.

"The busiest time for visitation to N.Y.C. is typically the period between Thanksgiving and Christmas," said NYC & Company spokesman Chris Heywood.

In addition to seeing the Rockefeller Center tree and decorated windows, many December visitors come to shop. Naturally, chain retailers — especially the Manhattan flagships for stores like Macy's — are a big draw. But New York is also full of one-of-a-kind shops and ethnic neighbourhoods where you can find unique merchandise in all price ranges.

CHRISTMAS MARKETS The city is home to several Christmas markets, selling everything from mittens to ornaments to arts and crafts and toys. Check out the Holiday Market in the red-and-white candy-striped tents at Union Square (East 14th Street); the Holiday Shops at Bryant Park (42nd Street and Fifth Avenue), where you'll also find a shimmering Christmas tree and a rink with free ice skating; and the 74 vendors at Grand Central Terminal's Holiday Gift Fair. Grand Central hosts its free annual Kaleidoscope Light Show Dec. 1 through New Year's Day.

INTERNATIONAL FLARE Be sure to include stores with international themes on your shopping tour. Takashimaya, the famous Japanese department store, has a Manhattan location at 693 Fifth Ave. (54th Street) so beautifully decorated that the displays could be in a museum. Look for accessories, cosmetics, home products, confections and teas. For bargains, Elise Loehnen, editor-at-large at Lucky magazine, suggests exploring the stores run by Indian merchants in Jackson Heights, Queens, by taking the No. 7 train to the Roosevelt Avenue/74th Street subway station.

CHINATOWN In Chinatown in Lower Manhattan, stores selling produce outside often sell nonperishables inside, like woks, hard-to-find seasonings and easy-to-use mixes. They make great presents for college kids perfecting their dorm cooking or tofu-eaters looking to spice up their lives. Loehnen recommends the Kam Man Market at 200 Canal St.

NATURAL HISTORY From Chinatown, head north to Soho, where you'll find The Evolution Store at 120 Spring St., which sells gifts for budding Darwins and other natural history types: Replica skulls and skeletons, anatomical models, posters, colourful mounted butterflies, scorpion paperweights and even flavoured lollipops with genuine crickets inside.

FASHION One of Loehnen's favourite places in Soho is the Young Designers Market at 268 Mulberry St., between Prince and Houston streets, open weekends. The "small indie designers" change every week, and "the jewelry is particularly strong," she said.

ART TOYS Also worth a visit is Kidrobot at 118 Prince St., the Lucky magazine editor says. The store, which does have locations in Miami, Los Angeles and several other cities, showcases collectible and limited-edition "art toys," from cartoonish reindeers to two-headed furry creatures called "furillas." A little farther uptown, Loehnen suggests checking out John Derian's stores at 6 and 10 E. Second St. "He has an exquisite eye for one-off antiquities, curios and china," and he's known for his collections of decoupage, she said.

MUSEUMS Nearly all museum stores can be entered without paying admission to the exhibits. You'll find unusual jewelry, art books, housewares, stationery, posters and postcards in all price ranges in, among other places, the shops at the Museum of Modern Art (53rd Street between Fifth and Sixth avenues), the Cooper-Hewitt National Design Museum (2 E. 91st St.) and even the New York Transit Museum, which sells everything from subway-map shower curtains to colourful purses made from recycled maps. The shop at the Guggenheim Museum (Fifth Avenue and 89th Street) is selling a special edition of jewelry this season called Restoration Rocks made from bits of the museum's original Frank Lloyd Wright building that were recovered during a recent restoration.

BOOKS Finally, don't forget the city's specialty bookstores, including Drama Book Shop in the theatre district, 250 W. 40th St.; Bonnie Slotnick Cookbooks, 163 W. 10th St., specializing in rare and old cookbooks; and the new Idlewild Books, 12 W. 19th St., which sells guidebooks, novels and other literature about places around the world, along with maps, globes and custom-made destination kits.

For more detailed shopping guidance, check out Suzy Gershman's Born to Shop New York (Frommer's). Recommendations include chocolates from La Maison du Chocolat, Madison Avenue near 78th Street; silk flower hairclips from Dulken & Derrick, 12 W. 21st St.; and a visit to Bergdorf Goodman, Fifth Avenue and 57th Street.

THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

THE EVOLUTION STORE

The Evolution Store has great gift ideas for your budding Darwinist at home.

On the web

- Lucky magazine shopping guide to New York City: *luckymag.com/sites/cityguides/new-york-city*
- NYC & Co.: *nycgo.com*. Click on "shopping."

PATRICK J. CASHIN/MTA/THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

The annual Holiday Gift Fair in Vanderbilt Hall of Grand Central Station is a popular shopping destination.

Airfares

LONDON $99
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Orlando $6
Travel Nov 28 - Dec 5/ts + taxes & fees $223

Jamaica $95
Travel Jan 13 - Jan 20/wg + taxes & fees $266

Cancun $105
Travel Jan 6 - Jan 13/wg + taxes & fees $277

New York City $178
Travel Jan 21 - Jan 28/pd + taxes & fees $117

Las Vegas $199
Travel Dec 7 - Dec 11/wg + taxes & fees $212

All-inclusive Holidays

Punta Cana 4-Star $377
Grand Paradise Bavaro + taxes & fees $309
INCLUDES roundtrip airfare, transfers and 5 nights 4-star all-inclusive accom. Departs Dec 15/sqv/5g. ADD monster truck safari from $110.

Cancun 4-Star $447
Oasis Cancun + taxes & fees $267
INCLUDES roundtrip airfare, transfers and 7 nights 5-star all-inclusive accom. Departs Nov 28/nol/ts. ADD horseback riding on the beach from $94.

Jamaica 4-Star $497
Holiday Inn Sunspree + taxes & fees $256
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Holidays

Bahamas Cruise $179
Carnival Imagination + taxes & fees $69
INCLUDES 3-night Carnival cruise, onboard meals and entertainment. Sail roundtrip from Miami and visit Nassau. Port charges included. Sails Jan 9. UPGRADE to oceanview stateroom from $10 per night.

Las Vegas 4 Nights $269
Circus Circus Hotel & Casino + taxes & fees $212
INCLUDES roundtrip airfare and 4 nights 3-star accom on the Las Vegas Strip. Departs Dec 7/inf/wg. UPGRADE to 4-star Monte Carlo from $20 per night. UPGRADE to 5-star MGM Grand from $38 per night.

Mont Tremblant $499
Les Suites Tremblant + taxes and fees $49
INCLUDES 4 nights 3-star accom and 3-day lift pass. Departs Jan 25/usv. UPGRADE to 5-star Fairmont Tremblant from $37 per night.

Family Holidays

DISNEY $199*
Best Western Lake Buena Vista + taxes & fees $223
INCLUDES roundtrip airfare and 7 nights 3-star accom at *Walt Disney World* Resort in Orlando. Departs Nov 28/inf/ts. BONUS Gatorland admission ticket included. ADD 6-day *Magic Your Way* Base Ticket from $254. ADD *Disney* Character breakfast from $96.

Hawai'i $849*
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Home to the famous Great Barrier Reef, Queensland is a true diving and snorkeling paradise. The World Heritage Centre lists it as the world's largest reef; in fact, its sheer size is so expansive it's the only living organism, which can be seen from outer space.

Sitting off the northeast coast, the Great Barrier Reef is composed of 3,000 individual reefs and coral islands stretching an almost unbelievable 1,500 miles. Within this amazing ecosystem there are over 400 types of coral, 1,500 species of fish, and 4,000 kinds of mollusks, as well as dugongs, more affectionately known as sea cows, and endangered green turtles, among other sea creatures.

Amid the 600 islands, you'll find 25 beautifully placed resorts. To get a Jacques Cousteau-like peek at the reefs, there are expedition-style cruises and dive boats. You can also experience the Reef through day trips to sand islands or pontoons.

Visit **www.destinationqueensland.com**

Australia.com

An Epic Romance

Fall in love during your trip to Australia. Be enchanted by the colours and never-ending skies, walk along remote beaches, experience luxury and solitude, toast with our famous wines and create your own grand romance.

With its array of stimulating outdoor adventures, its wide open spaces and natural wonders, it's not surprising that Australia is tailor made for a romantic escape.

Sailing the Whitsundays, Queensland. A yacht, a beach and no one else in sight make for a perfect romantic escape, and Australia has the ideal ingredients in the Whitsunday Islands. Stretching along the mid-Queensland coast, the rugged, jigsaw-shaped Whitsundays are the finest cruising waters in the country. Of the 74 islands in the group, most are encircled by bays that make marvellous natural marinas – and exploring the Whitsundays by boat is about as easy as booking a room at one of the island's resorts. Based at Airlie Beach and Hamilton Island, there are many charter specialists that offer yachts to suit just about any budget and level of nautical know-how. For anyone with some sailing experience, a bareboat charter is the way to go. Despite the name, a bareboat generally comes complete with a well equipped kitchen, a barbecue, stereo system, hot showers and complete safety gear. Guests who are not confident sailors can rent a skipper, or choose a motor cruiser, which are relatively easy to operate. Charts and radios are provided, along with advice on the best anchorages, beaches, diving and fishing spots. For more information, visit **www.destinationqueensland.com**

Escapes

For unrivalled luxury, visit Southern Ocean Lodge, a unique and exclusive travel experience on Kangaroo Island in South Australia. Floating atop a secluded cliff on a rugged stretch of coast, the lodge commands peerless views of the wild Southern Ocean and pristine Kangaroo Island wilderness. Sensitive, intimate and sophisticated, Southern Ocean Lodge is a sanctuary of refined comfort and luxe, Kangaroo Island style.

The Northern Territory is the perfect backdrop for a romantic escape. Fiery sunsets, deserted beaches, secluded hideaways and dramatic landscapes – your romantic spirit will be ignited in Australia. Described as "Wild Bush Luxury." Bamurru Plains, located on the edge of Kakadu, exposes guests to the sights and sounds of this spectacular environment in style and exclusivity. Explore the surrounding area on airboat trips, drives and walks. For more information, visit **www.australia.com**

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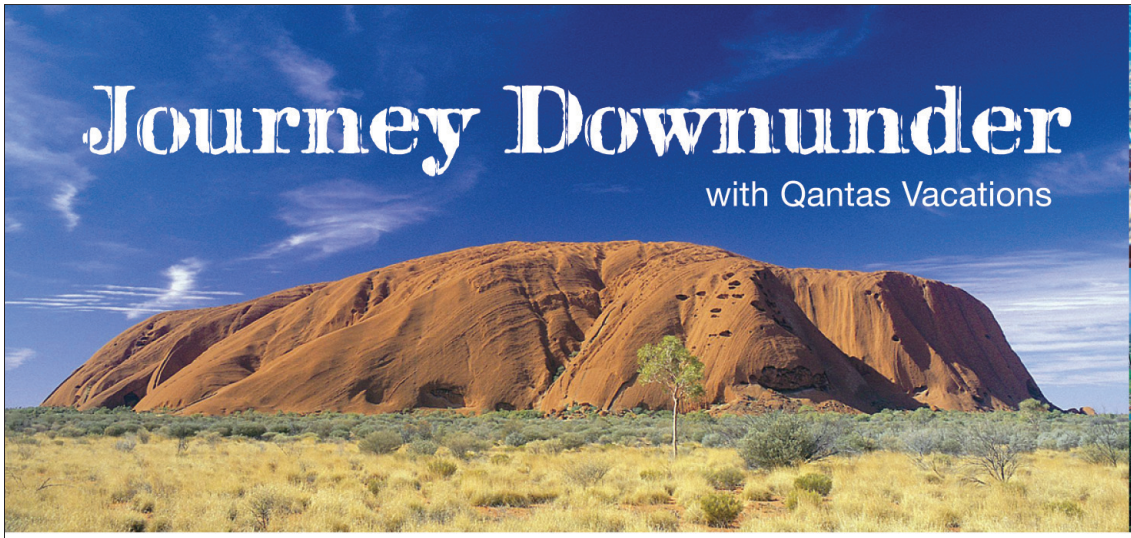
Popping the question?

Why not pop the question on an Orion Expedition Cruise to the Kimberly and Arnhem land in Australia's remote north-west. Ready with your argyle diamond ring, Kalgoorlie gold or Paspaley pearls, be swept away by the dramatic contrasts of Australia's north-west, rich in Aboriginal culture and galleries of ancient artwork. Towards the west, in the historic pearling town of Broome, the colours of nature are vibrant and intense: rich red earth, azure blue seas and brilliant white sand beaches. North of Broome lies the ragged Kimberley coast, a place you can only comprehend from the sea. Rugged gorges, inlets, waterfalls plunging 100 metres all combine for an awe-inspiring experience you simply can't have by travelling overland. For more information, visit **www.australia.com**



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The Outback has never been so tempting with the launch of *Australia* the movie. Explore Uluru (Ayers Rock), Kata Tjuta (Olgas) and Kings Canyon. Visit the famous outback town of Alice Springs. *Mention this promotion and receive a free upgrade to the award winning Kings Canyon Wilderness Lodge, including dinner and breakfast, a $220 value!***

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Terms & Conditions: *$400 per couple savings applies to the Qantas Aussie AirPass. Must purchase min. 3 nights accommodation with Qantas Vacations to qualify for 'Outback Airpass' offer: Zones 2 & 3 of Qantas Aussie Airpass included at Zone 1 price. Valid for the first 100 new bookings ticketed by 12/31/08 for travel by 8/31/09, not combinable with any other special offer. Seats are strictly limited and subject to availability. Prices are 'from' per person, based travel on low season travel (10/20/08 – 11/27/08 and 5/1/09 – 5/31/09), seasonal supplements apply for other dates. Prices do not include fuel surcharges of approx. C$332.60 for the International flights and the three free stopover flights in Australia and the Navigation Services Surcharge of C$30. Insurance and fuel surcharges per flight will apply to additional Australian domestic flights purchased. C$22.70 per sector on Qantas flight numbers QF1400-1499/2000-2849. C$22.40 per sector on all other Qantas domestic Australia flight numbers. Prices are current at the time of posting (11/17/08); airlines frequently change their prices as a result of fare increases and/or fuel surcharges. Prices may differ when booking and are not guaranteed until full payment is received. Some airlines may impose additional charges if you choose to check baggage. Please contact your airline or refer to its website for detailed information regarding their checked baggage policies. Cancellation penalties and other restrictions apply. All prices, itineraries and routings are subject to change. Please call for our current prices. CST# 2001136-50

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Australia.com

Finding E
Au

SCOUTING FOR LOCATIONS

Set on the explosive brink of World War II, *Australia* is the epic tale of one woman's journey to a faraway continent. Starring Nicole Kidman as a buttoned-up English aristocrat who comes to save the land she has inherited and Hugh Jackman as the rough-hewn local who helps her, they embark on a trip together across hundreds of miles of the world's most beautiful, yet unforgiving terrain, only to face the bombing of the city of Darwin.

In this lush telling, the landscape becomes its own character, inspiring viewers to reconnect with their spirit of romance and love of adventure in a way that only Australia can. Shot on location in Darwin, Sydney, the Kimberley region, and Bowen, a coastal town in Queensland, viewers get a sense of the dramatic and rugged landscape, stretches of sparsely populated wilderness, and cities of the day, like Sydney and Darwin.

Bullo River Station

Thought to be the inspiration behind Faraway Downs, the homestead featured in the film, Bullo Rover Station is in the north west corner of the Northern Territory and home to around 900,000 cattle, a stunning variety of native Australian animals including wallabies and dingoes as well as thousands of migratory birds and massive Boab trees. For more info, visit **www.australiasoutback.com**

Kununurra

Fertility waters? Nicole Kidman caused quite a stir when she recently named a local waterfall just outside of Kununnurra for helping her and other members of the crew in falling pregnant during shooting. Kununurra is an aboriginal word meaning "big water". For more information, visit **www.westernaustralia.com**

The Kimberley

When cast and crew had a break from shooting in the majestic Kimberley region, they shopped for Argyle diamond and Paspaley Pearls as gifts for friends and family.

South Australia

The South Australian Outback is a boundless place of inspiration and enigmatic glamour, where endless sunset skies give way to an explosion of stars in an uninterrupted, deep blue night. Be inspired by the thrill of driving cattle across Australia's vast outback and join The Great Australian Outback Cattle Drive. For more information, visit **www.southaustralia.com**

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www.goway.com/ausforfree

Australia.com

Baz Luhrmann's AUSTRALIA

Bowen

Bowen, a sleepy coastal town in northern Queensland was transformed during shooting to become WWII Darwin. After filming, a "Thank you Bowen" concert was played featuring none other than Nicole Kidman's husband, Keith Urban. For more info, visit **www.destinationqueensland.com**

Sydney

Hugh Jackman was born and grew up in Sydney and Nicole Kidman was raised here. Baz Luhrmann and Catherine Martin were also born in New South Wales, Catherine in Sydney and Baz in Herons Creek, a tiny rural settlement in the northern part of the state. For more information, visit **www.sydneyaustralia.com**

Melbourne

A great city to wine and dine that special someone, Melbourne boasts great events, a passion for food and wine and a fabulous arts scene. Known as a style-setter, Melbourne is home to a non-stop program of festivals, renowned dining, major art exhibitions and musical extravaganzas. For more information, visit **www.visitmelbourne.com**

Tasmania

Australia's island state is known for its accessible wilderness, fresh produce and relaxed lifestyle. You could create your own epic love story on self-drive holiday around Tasmania. For more information, visit **www.discovertasmania.com**

Australia movie locations

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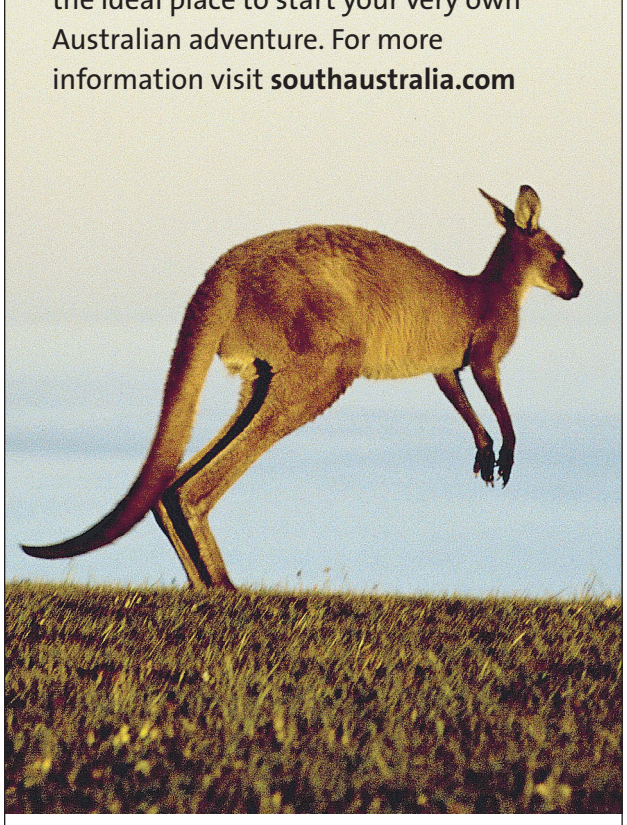
Kangaroo Island
South Australia

Teeming with kangaroos, koalas, wallabies, seals, sea lions, penguins and goannas, this is the best place in Australia to see the widest range of free roaming native animals in their natural habitat. Otherwise known as "Australia's Galapagos" the island has retained its rich diversity of wildlife, much of which is not found on the mainland. The Island is also recognized for its sublime coastlines, rural life, friendly locals, exceptional wineries and epicurean delights.

Kangaroo Island is also home to Australia's first luxury lodge, Southern Ocean Lodge, which opened in early 2008. Easily accessible by air (30 minutes from Adelaide) and ferry, Kangaroo Island is the ideal place to start your very own Australian adventure. For more information visit **southaustralia.com**



South Australia.
A brilliant blend.

Australia.com

Adventure anyone?

Sunsets, Saddles & Shiraz

Travelers wishing to replicate an *Australia* outback experience can now do so on a three-night South Australian cattle droving tour. Called "Sunsets, Saddles, and Shiraz," this experience is ideal for film fans, adventure seekers, and lovers of the great outdoors. The tour combines the romance of cattle droving with gourmet food and wine, native wildlife, and the stunning scenery of South Australia's Flinders Ranges, the gateway to the Outback.

The adventure begins at Nilpena, a working cattle station on the edge of LakeTorrens, where participants meet the drovers and are provided with horses and equipment necessary for two days in the saddle. A degree of riding experience is required along with a moderate level of fitness.

During the tour, riders will find themselves immersed in an authentic Australian Outback adventure, working alongside drovers, dining with them around the campfire, and hearing about their unique lifestyle. Guests will learn to identify animal tracks and native plants while they herd approximately 200 cattle across red desert landscapes and sandy creek beds lined with river gum trees. Packed lunches and billy tea breaks, plus the opportunity to go in search of rare wildlife, such as the shy and elusive yellow-footed rock wallaby, are also included.

Sleep under the stars in authentic Australian swag and one night at the award-wining Parachilna's Prairie Hotel, quite possibly Australia's most famous, and luxurious, Outback hotel renowned for its specialty "feral food," including kangaroo, emu, camel, native limes, and bush tomatoes.

For further information on this tour, please visit **www.prairiehotel.com.au** and for more information on South Australia, visit **www.southaustralia.com**

Dive Queensland

The waters of Queensland offer some of the best underwater adventures on earth. Take the plunge and discover this wide, blue wonder accessible to all. Azure seas sparkling against crystal white sand, tropical islands, warm inviting waters home to a colourful kaleidoscope of reefs, shoals, coral cays and mysterious shipwrecks teeming with exotic tropical marine life. A mild climate and clear visibility make year-round diving a vibrant reality. **www.australia.com**

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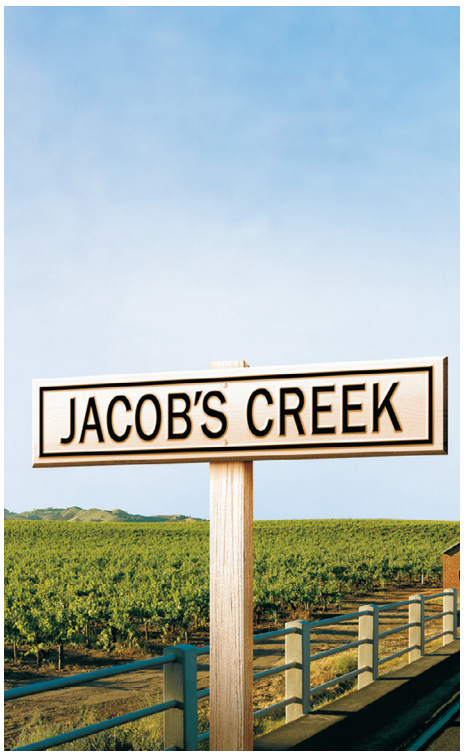
Welcome to our place

Just where is our place? It all started back in 1847 when the first vines were planted by the banks of Jacob's Creek, in South Australia's Barossa Valley. Yes it's true - there is a real creek called Jacob's Creek. Coincidentally, there are also vineyards bearing the same name.

The creek has seen a few changes since those first plantings, and we now source our grapes from many of the finest regions in Australia. What hasn't changed is the pride we take in the wines we make.

Jacob's Creek® wines may come from Australia, but they're crafted to be enjoyed wherever you are. For a great experience at your place, we've created recipes specifically to pair with each Jacob's Creek® wine. Here's one to try this Holiday season.



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T-Bone Steak with Mushroom Butter
Jacob's Creek® Reserve Shiraz – Serves 4

4 T-Bone Steaks

Mushroom Butter:

- 1 cup unsalted butter
- 1 cup Cremini mushrooms, diced
- 1 tablespoon dried Porcini mushrooms, soaked, rinsed and chopped
- 1 clove garlic, crushed
- ½ cup white wine
- 1 tablespoon lemon juice
- 1 tablespoon fresh chives, chopped
- 1 tablespoon fresh parsley, chopped
- 1 tablespoon Dijon mustard
- ½ teaspoon each salt and pepper

Sauté Cremini mushrooms in 2 tablespoons of the butter until soft.

Add Porcini mushrooms along with garlic and sauté a further 1 to 2 minutes. Add the white wine, increase heat and simmer until almost all of the liquid has reduced. Add lemon juice, reduce once again, turn off heat and fold through herbs with mustard, salt and pepper. Allow mixture to cool down to room temperature.

In a food processor, process remaining butter until light and creamy. Add cooled mushroom mixture and pulse so as to keep the mixture rough in texture.

To make your butter log, lay a large piece of foil on a flat surface. Place butter in the centre of the foil in a long line (about 30 cm), leaving a few centimetres of foil at either end. Fold foil over lengthwise to roll butter into a log, twist ends and refrigerate until firm.

to serve:

Grill or BBQ steaks until done. Slice four 1-cm discs of butter from log and place each onto a steak. Butter discs should melt over steaks as they are being brought to the table. You can always store remaining butter in the freezer for future use.

Serve with a blue cheese salad, baked potatoes and Jacob's Creek® Reserve Shiraz.

For a full range of Jacob's Creek® recipes and pairings, visit **www.jacobscreek.com**

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ADVENTURE ESSENTIALS

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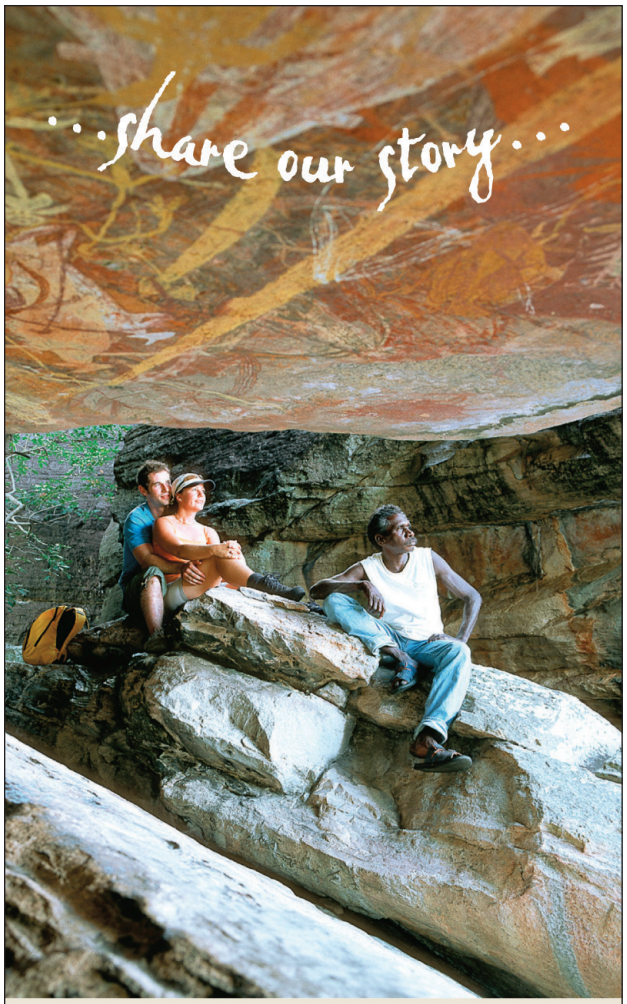
The iPod touch is the funnest iPod ever. You can listen to your music, watch movies and play hundreds of games. Go to iTunes and download exclusive content from "Australia" AND the Set to Screen Podcast Series hosted by Baz Luhrmann. To win your very own iPod touch, visit **www.metronews.ca/australia**

Arnott's Tim Tams

Australia's favourite biscuits, Tim Tams, are made from two layers of chocolate malted biscuit separated by a light cream filling and coated in a thin layer of chocolate. Aficionados enjoy their Tim Tams using the Tim Tam Slam, a technique that involves biting off opposite corners of the biscuit and using it as a straw to sip a hot beverage such as coffee or tea. Ex-pat Australians and Canadian chocolate lovers are rejoicing that Tim Tams are now available in Canada.



The Art of the Outback

Connect with the oldest living culture on earth or lend an ear to a local for a colorful story of pioneering days gone by. Australia's Northern Territory is a place to discover Australia's cultural heritage first hand and learn ancient Dreamtime stories of the indigenous Aboriginals that will leave you with heartfelt memories and friendships to last a lifetime. Embrace the true spirit of exploration and replenish your spirit as you experience the real outback life in Australia's Northern Territory.

For more information talk to a travel professional.
Visit www.australiasoutback.com

share our story NORTHERN TERRITORY australiasoutback.com

Australia.com

Australia's Outback

Uluru in the Northern Territory is one of Australia's most recognisable natural icons—a huge, rounded sandstone monolith, 9.4 kilometres in circumference, rising to a height of more than 340 metres above the plain. Uluru is a unique and beautiful place that has spiritual and cultural significance to the traditional Indigenous landowners of the area, the Anangu people. One of its most striking features is its apparent ability to 'change colour' as the light plays across it during the course of a day.

One of the best ways to travel to the Red Centre and traverse the Australian outback is on The Ghan. Boarding in Adelaide or Darwin, experience one of the most fascinating great train journeys of the world. Marvel at the spectacular Australian landscapes from fertile countryside surrounding Adelaide to the rusty hues of the Red Centre, onto the tropical splendour of the Top End. The train's emblem, of course, is an Afghan mounted on a camel, tribute to the redoubtable cameleers who, with their plodding .beasts somehow found a way across the red heart of Australia while constructing the overland telegraph line. For more information, visit **www.australiasoutback.com**

Escapes

The population of Coober Pedy in South Australia's northern Outback is almost as colourful as the opals that have made the town famous. About half the town's 4000 residents, who hail from 50 countries, live underground in 'dug-outs' to escape the 44°C (111°F) heat in summer. In this cosmopolitan mining town, fortunes from the earth can be made overnight, and as a tourist destination it attracts 100,000 visitors every year. Coober Pedy is also home to the only international underground hotel, the Desert Cave Hotel. For more information, visit **www.australia.com**

In outback Queensland, on the escarpments to the west of the Atherton Tableland you'll find Wrotham Park Lodge. One of Australia's most luxurious outback experiences is

part of a 1.5 million acre (that's twice the size of Luxembourg) working cattle station which is steeped in history. Today, the station carries around 70,000 head of cattle and a team of stockmen, farm hands, helicopter pilots, mechanics, cooks and other staff the run the operation. Stay in one of 10 self-contained guest cottages known as Quarters that are unlike anything the average cowboy is likely to encounter – each spacious, air-conditioned building is equipped with leather armchairs, ensuite bathrooms, king-size beds and a private veranda for drinking in the view over the Mitchell River. For more information, visit **www.australia.com**

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LOSE YOURSELF IN THE MOVIE.
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Lights out
The Bronx Zoo is bringing in reindeer and turning off the lights at its annual evening holiday light show to reduce its carbon footprint. A daytime Wild Wonderland will be held instead. **THE ASSOCIATED PRESS**

N.Y.C.'s holiday windows go way back

Retail visionary R.H. Macy was friends with legendary showman P.T. Barnum — two rich guys hanging out in the 1860s.

Why is this important now? Because had Barnum not suggested to Macy that he put his prized collection of mechanical toys in the windows of his flagship store at Christmastime, we might not be able to enjoy the over-the-top holiday displays — filled with dazzling high-tech elements unimaginable when wind-up toys drew crowds — we do today.

The theme of this year's display at the Herald Square flagship — which bills itself as the world's largest store and is celebrating its 150th anniversary — is the making of Christmas magic. The six oversized windows facing Broadway depict the detail, hope and love that go into different elements of the holidays, such as tree lights, ornaments, snow and tinsel. There's no merchandise along the main thoroughfare, though gift ideas are featured in smaller windows on other facades of the block-size building.

SETH WENIG/THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

A holiday window at Macy's is seen in New York on Monday.

"I think kids will love it with all its crazy moving parts, and I want them to believe this is how things are made," explains Paul Olszewski, Macy's Herald Square director of windows.

It's not quite that easy: The windows are the result of a year's worth of work and a lot of fretting. He then spends the better part of the holiday season outside the windows with the crowd, hoping to see kids say, "Wow!" and also seeing what could work better.

Company historians trace the windows back to the end of the 19th century, when Macy had to hire extra workers to wind up the toys on a schedule to keep them humming.

The birth of the Thanksgiving Day parade in 1924 convinced the company to even further ratchet up its Christmas display, considering there were crowds dozens deep on 34th Street, plus it was a prosperous time so Macy's found itself in a friendly competition with other retailers, says Bob Rutan, the retailer's historian.

THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

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Taxing news

Tourists flying into Costa Rica will soon have to pay a new $15 US tax. The new tax replaces a 3 per cent tax on hotel rooms and is expected to take effect later this year. It should generate $25 million a year to help the government's Costa Rica Tourism Institute. METRO NEWS SERVICES

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Dark skies for stargazers

The Torrance Barrens in Muskoka is a peaceful wilderness area featuring ancient rock outcrops to appreciate by day, and darkness by night.

So much darkness, in fact, that the 1,900 hectares of Crown land southeast of Bala, Ont., is officially recognized as a dark sky reserve.

"Dark sky is like a holy grail for stargazers," says the new book Frommer's 500 Places to See Before They Disappear.

The book includes the Torrance Barrens on a list of "10 places where the sky's still dark at night."

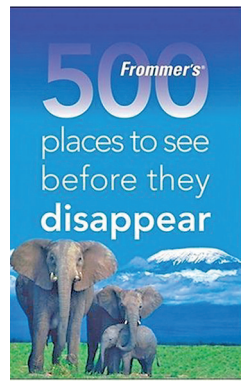
Ontario designated the area in 1999 as "the world's first dark sky reserve — a move that recognized the region as a protected space free from intrusion by urban light pollution," says the Muskoka Heritage Foundation.

Light from distant galaxies is "so delicate" that complete darkness is necessary to view it in a telescope, says the Royal Astronomical Society of Canada.

Other Canadian sites on the list are Gordon's Park, Manitoulin Island, Ont.; McDonald Park Dark Sky Preserve, near Abbotsford, B.C.; and Cypress Hills Dark-Sky Preserve in southwest Saskatchewan and southeast Alberta.

On the web

- muskokaheritage.org/natural/torrancebarrens



THE CANADIAN PRESS

Sunquest offers rain protection guarantee

DEALS Sunquest Vacations has introduced RainCheck, which it calls a "weather protection guarantee" for winter beach holidays.

If it rains too much for more than half of a traveller's vacation, he or she can replace their beach holiday with another one.

So, on a one-week vacation, for example, it would have to rain on four or more days. And on each of those days the rain would have to amount to at least half an inch.

In the case of a flight-hotel package costing $1,000, not including taxes and other surcharges, rained-out travellers would receive a credit worth $1,000 that could be applied to a future trip, which could be to a different resort. They would not get back the taxes and surcharges.

RainCheck costs $39.95 per person (children under 12 staying in their parent's room are included for free). It can be used on Sunquest, Holiday House and Fun Sun trips.

THE CANADIAN PRESS

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Titanic relics
An exhibit featuring artifacts from the Titanic returns to The Science Museum of Minnesota on June 12, 2009. New items will include 62 perfume vials taken from the wreckage in 2000. THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

Sleeping in strange places

TheTravelJunkie

Next time you're looking for a hotel, why not rest your weary head somewhere a little unusual? From survival-pod hotels in Amsterdam to dog-themed motels in the U.S., there are plenty of strange places out there in which to catch some shut-eye:

METRO WORLD NEWS

The Capsule Hotel, which consists of oil rig survival pods, is located on a canal in Amsterdam.

DOG BARK PARK INN: Pit stops to kitschy roadside attractions are a staple of any family car trip across America. So if you find yourself passing through Cottonwood, Idaho, be sure to stay at the Dog Bark Park Inn, dogbarkparkinn.com, a B&B guesthouse inside the World's Biggest Beagle. This two-storey wooden structure, built to look like a big dog, offers simple accommodations at $92 US/night (including breakfast, which thankfully isn't kibble). For a lasting souvenir, check out the gift shop's "chainsaw art," a collection of wooden beagle carvings.

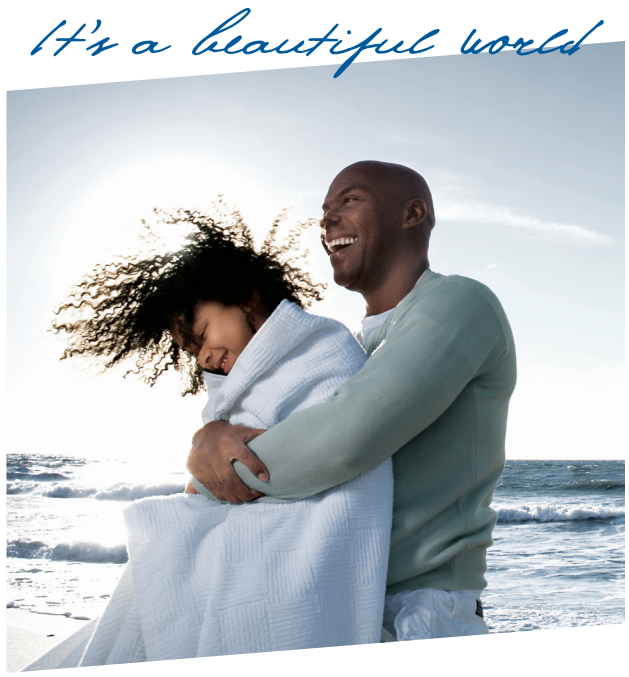
THE CAPSULE INN: If you're claustrophobic, Japan's Capsule Inn, capsuleinn.com, may not be for you. Located in Akihabara, an electronics district of Tokyo, the hotel has 10 floors offering space-efficient sleeps in coffin-like suites. Each capsule has blinds, a TV, radio, alarm clock, lights and air-conditioning, all of which must be controlled while in the sleeping position — the capsule is so small, you can't stand up.

CAPSULE HOTEL: Seems like small spaces are all the rage these days. Amsterdam's Capsule Hotel, capsulehotel.info, offers oil rig survival pods in which to spend the night. Originally built in 1972, these bright orange life rafts are now being used as quirky accommodations. They're a bit of a tight squeeze but for those who want to get in touch with their inner survivor this sounds like an interesting way to do it.

WOODLYN PARK: This New Zealand complex has an eclectic mix of strange lodging choices. You can sleep in a 1950s Bristol Freighter Plane, which is said to have been one of the last Allied planes out of Vietnam.

You can hop on the Waitomo Express, a refurbished rail carriage that sleeps six or you can pretend you're in Bilbo Baggins' Shire, sleeping in an underground Hobbit-esque cottage. Woodlyn Park's newest motel attraction is the Waitanic, a converted WWII patrol boat. See woodlynpark.co.nz.

Julia Dimon is co-host of Word Travels, airing on OLN; juliadimon.com.



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Automotive

A METRO JOINT VENTURE WITH: carguide magazine.com

EDITOR: KUMAR SAHA, KUMAR.SAHA@METRONEWS.CA

New Corolla shows class

Toyota engineers continue to improve global mega-seller

Many people are passionate about the Toyota Corolla according to the Corolla's chief engineer, Shinichi Yasui. He says the original engineering maxims that shaped the Corolla back in the mid-1960s are still followed today. And becoming a member of the Corolla engineering group is one of the most prestigious appointments in the company.

They've sold 33 million since its inception, after all. The newest one started with a new development program that sought to combine the best-in-class aspects from each region in the world into a single car. For instance, during final development the Toyota Motor Manufacturing Canada (TMMC) team initiated a few changes — including increasing the distance between the accelerator and brake pedals to accommodate a man's winter boot, increasing the size of storage pockets to fit larger-sized North American electronics, and made the cup holders big enough for an extra-large double-double.

Oh, and the door pockets were reshaped to fit an ice scraper — photos and samples were sent to Japanese engineers not familiar with our quintessential winter tool. A few other highlights include dual glove boxes, a purse hook, audio systems with auxiliary input jack on all models, and standard air conditioning. The engineers also added an electric positive temperature coefficient heater system that accelerates the initial warm-up of the cabin when the engine is cold.

That's just the inside.

On the outside, the Corolla was restyled to appear more dynamic and upscale. The new Corolla looks leagues better than the old one — but still looks just like a Camry was distilled into a smaller form factor. The new Corolla is actually 60 mm (2.4 in) wider, 10 mm (0.4-in) longer, and a full 15 mm (0.6 inches) lower than the outgoing model. The new proportions lend the car to better road presence, stability and cabin room.

Inside, the new Toyota Corolla features several improvements including bigger storage pockets and cup holders, dual glove boxes and a more efficient heating system.

"The entire car has moved nearly a class up, and reflects a mid-size car feel in a compact car."

The car also benefits immensely from the use of ultra-high grade steel reinforcements, plus what Toyota calls its "Global Body Line," an advanced automated assembly system used for Lexus vehicles.

The old Corolla used 40 initial body welds, whereas the new car has more than 130. This helps build body rigidity and quality control from the outset.

The new base 1.8-litre four-cylinder engine produces 132 horsepower at 6,000 rpm, and 128 lb-ft of torque at 4,400 rpm. The power is linear and usable for highway merging, while the torque has been tuned to aid in-town puttering. It's standard-fare for CE, LE, and S models — with either a five-speed manual or four-speed automatic transmission.

Returning to the lineup is the XRS model, with a torquey 2.4L 4-cylinder that's a league apart from the original, high-revving XRS featuring the Celica's high-performance motor.

The XRS also gets a few other improvements, like a front strut brace, four-wheel disc brakes, 17-inch alloy wheels and vehicle stability control.

Standard Corollas do with rear drum brakes, but ABS with Electronic Brakeforce Distribution and Brake Assist are standard.

The range starts with the well-equipped CE, complete with roll-up windows. Otherwise, it's about all the car you'd ever need. Next up, the LE model is very well equipped, and even features automatic climate control and a smart key system — both features normally found on luxury cars.

Above the LE is the S, featuring a few sporty touches a la the outgoing model, like a sporty body kit and rear spoiler. Fully loaded, the XRS completes the lineup.

The entire car has moved nearly a class up, and reflects a mid-size car feel in a compact car.

CARGUIDE STAFF

2009 Toyota Corolla

Type: Compact car
Price: $14,850
Engine: I4, DOHC, 1.8L / I4, DOHC, 2.4L
HP: 126-158

Highlights

- Larger
- Feels mid-size
- Quieter

Ford, Volvo cars lead safety list

WINNERS The insurance industry designated dozens of new cars and trucks, led by Ford Motor Co. and its Volvo subsidiary, to its annual list of the safest vehicles yesterday, helped by the increased use of anti-rollover technology.

Ford and Volvo had 16 vehicles in the 2009 model year on the Insurance Institute for Highway Safety's list of the safest new cars, followed by Honda Motor Co. with 13 vehicles.

Seventy-two cars, trucks and SUVs received the top safety pick designation for 2009, more than double the number of vehicles in the 2008 model year and three times the number in 2007.

"The sheer number of this year's winners indicates that automakers have made huge strides to improve crash protection," said Institute president Adrian Lund.

The selected vehicles are the best in protecting people in front, side and rear crash tests based on institute evaluations during the year.

Ford was led by the Ford Fusion and Mercury Milan midsize cars with optional ESC; the Ford F-150 pickup, Ford Edge and Ford Flex mid-size sport utility vehicles; and the Ford Escape and Mercury Mariner small SUVs. The list also included the Mazda Tribute, which has the same underpinnings as the Escape and Mariner.

THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

Stability

- The vehicles were required to have electronic stability control, or ESC, to qualify for the award.

For Insurance Institute of Highway Safety's complete list of winners, visit metronews.ca/auto

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Routan has room for all

JIM ROBINSON
for Metro Canada

According to Volkswagen Canada president and CEO John White, there still is, and will remain, a market for a vehicle that seats seven in comfort. So Volkswagen is launching a seven-seat minivan called the Routan.

Volkswagen Canada's position is that it's interested primarily in Honda Odyssey and Toyota Sienna buyers as they see an opportunity to attract import-minded consumers. With the cachet of being the only German maker in the mix, they feel they have a whole new market to plumb.

The Routan is being built in Windsor on the same line and using the same platform as the Chrysler Town & Country and the Dodge Grand Caravan. Also, partnering with Chrysler means coming to market a lot sooner than trying to develop one in-house, not to mention being much cheaper.

Volkswagen plans to sell 5,500 units a year, which would take them well over the 40,000-sales in Canada target.

Essentially, the Routan has crisp styling with the nose drawing heavily from the Tiguan compact crossover. The seats were made firmer as well as the suspension, in other words, more like a Volkswagen.

There are several minor changes, but what you see is what you get, which is essentially a Chrysler Town & Country, which is not a bad thing.

2009 VW Routan

Type: Minivan
Price: $27,975-$49,975
Engine: 4.0-litre SOHC V6
HP: 251

Highlights

- Seats seven
- Front-wheel-drive
- Plenty of power

Volkswagen has launched a full, seven-seat 2009 Routan minivan that will be offered in four trim levels. Styling cues take much from current VW products like the Tiguan-esque front treatment.

While the Americans get a choice of three engines, the Canadian Routan comes only with a Chrysler-sourced 4.0-litre, SOHC V6 putting out the same 251 hp and 259 lb/ft of torque as the T&C.

In front-drive (all-wheel-drive not available) power goes through a six-speed electronic automatic transmission with sequential shift mode. Fuel consumption is listed at 12.2L/100 km city and 7.9L/100 km highway.

The forward view is commanding and, thankfully, the materials used on the dashboard did not cause a reflection on the huge windshield, which is a major failing in many minivans of my experience including the one I currently own.

The 4.0-litre has a lot of poke and the six-speeds mesh so nicely that there is always the right amount of power for conditions.

Canada will get four trim levels: The base Trendline starting at $27,975; the Comfortline starting at $33,975; the Highline starting at $39,975; and the Execline (as tested here) starting at $49,975.

Each model has a large number of standard and optional features. Probably the best way to get a deeper look is to go to www.vw.ca and build one for yourself.

While this is classified as a "small" minivan, it is anything but and will fill any standard-size garage. But when it comes to picking a seat, there won't be any quibbling because there is room for all in the Routan.

The interior, along with the suspension, was modified to give a more European feel and flair.

With all three rows of seats up, there is 930 litres of cargo space behind the third row. Fold the third row seat beneath the cargo floor and there is 2,400 litres.

The third row, by the way, has three positions including tipping it over backwards to have tailgate party seating. The second row seats either fold or can be taken out completely for even more cargo space.

Standard features in the all-new 2009 Routan include three-zone climate control, CD player with six speakers, dual sliding side doors, front and side curtain airbags, Tire Pressure Monitoring System (TPMS), and Electronic Stabilization Program (ESP).

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Design inside the box

Nissan Cube finally coming to fans outside Japan

EMMA E FORREST
Metro World News

In the Japanese TV ad for the Nissan Cube, a Bambi-cute deer spots the car driving through the forest and rushes to throw herself in the road, faking injury so the two kind-hearted Cube drivers pick her up and put her in the back seat, where she achieves her goal — getting a ride in this lovable car.

MATT FOWLER/METRO WORLD NEWS

Metro's Global Motoring Editor Emma E Forrest gets a sneak preview of the cool new Nissan Cube at Nissan's European design HQ in central London.

That's the thing with the Cube, it's so irresistible that everyone wants a ride in one. When the Cube first appeared in 1998, it blew car design fans away with its unique, boxy shape and its asymmetrical design. More than just a car it was a beautifully conceived piece of product design, in the same way that the IPod is more than an MP3 player.

Those bitten by the Cube bug have been waiting to buy it ever since. But, as Alfonso Albaisa, VP of Nissan Design Europe, explained at the reveal of the third-generation version that is finally coming over here, there were obstacles to overcome, including reversing engineering to create a right-hand drive car.

The exterior is still show-stopping despite the crowded landscape for boxy cars, and the interior is truly the lounge that Albaisa intends you to relax in, complete with soft sofa-like seats, shag carpets and a large glass roof with a blind and a shoji shade that allows light through but cuts down heat.

"It's a car that doesn't want to be defined as car," says Albaisa. "More like an extra room that you could plug into your house."

The Cube arrives in the U.S. early 2009 (no specific date for Canada yet), and in Europe in late 2009, with 1.5-litre diesel and 1.6-litre gasoline powertrains.

Hyundai ready for diesel power

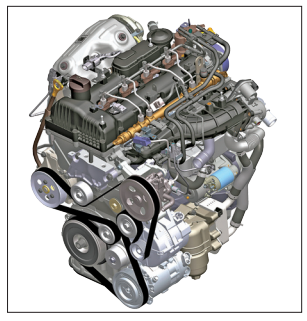
PLANT Hyundai has unveiled details of its newest diesel power plant, the R-Engine.

Available in two sizes, 2.0- and 2.2-litre, the new engines can comfortably beat the power outputs of all comparable German and French competitors with outputs of 184 hp, more than most rivals' V6s.

The R-Engine benefits from the third generation common rail system with piezo-electric injectors to deliver fuel at 1800-bar for an unprecedented degree of accuracy and control.

It also features an electronic variable geometry turbocharger and an advanced engine control unit (air system-based charge control).

The all-aluminum R-Engine is fitted with a 16-valve dual overhead camshaft, which is driven by an internal steel silent timing chain. For reduced vibration and lower noise, the R gets a lower balance shaft, which has been encased in a stiffened ladder frame housing for increased rigidity.



Hyundai's R-Engine diesel will enter production next year and will see its first application in SUVs and large sedans.

Weight saving features include serpentine belt with isolation pulley, a plastic head cover, plastic intake manifold and plastic oil filter housing.

More than 500 prototype engines were built during the 42-month-long development period, which encompassed a wide variety performance and emissions tests, endurance as well as NVH, cooling and lubrication studies.

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Canadian university presidents to visit India

Next week, six Canadian university presidents — including those from uWaterloo and SFU — will travel to India to participate in a higher education summit sponsored by the Federation of Indian Chambers of Commerce and Industry and India's Ministry of Human Resource Development. METRO NEWS SERVICES

Workology

CENTENNIAL COLLEGE Centennial College

EDITOR: DOUGLAS DUNLOP, DOUGLAS.DUNLOP@METRONEWS.CA

Overcoming those breaks in employment

RESUMÉS Resumé gaps raise red flags for most employers, a new survey confirms: More than nine out of 10 (93 per cent) executives polled said they'd be concerned about a candidate's fit for a position if his or her resumé showed involuntary periods of unemployment.

"In the current economy, employers are aware that people could be out of work through no fault of their own, but resumé gaps can still pose a significant obstacle for job candidates," said Dave Willmer, executive director of OfficeTeam, a leading staffing service specializing in the placement of highly skilled administrative professionals.

The survey was developed by OfficeTeam and conducted by an independent research firm. It is based on telephone interviews with 150 randomly selected senior executives at the 1,000 largest companies in the United States.

"Applicants who have lengthy periods of unemployment should focus on quantifying their achievements and emphasizing specific skills and experience," said Willmer.

OfficeTeam offers the following tips to overcome gaps in employment: Provide an explanation, highlight the positive, stick to the facts, seek out referrals, and fill in the gaps by looking for temporary assignments while you're looking for a full-time job.

METRO NEWS SERVICES

Improving Canada's business DNA

Job Trends

ROBYN YOUNG
for Metro Canada

ROBYN YOUNG/FOR METRO CANADA

Kunal Gupta, founder of Impact Entrepreneurship Group and president and CEO of Polar Mobile, speaks to an aspiring entrepreneur at Impact's leadership summit on Nov. 19, an event hosted by Impact for Entrepreneurship Week Canada.

Tough economic times call for innovation and creativity.

That's why a recession might be the perfect time to think about starting your own business, say some of the country's business leaders.

While hundreds of thousands of workers across North America lost their jobs last week, Canadian entrepreneurs from across the country convened in Toronto for Entrepreneurship Week Canada.

They shared ideas about how to further grow their businesses and more generally, how to grow the entrepreneurial spirit in Canada.

At a leadership summit hosted by Impact Entrepreneurship Group, a student-led organization for young entrepreneurs, new and experienced entrepreneurs alike said an economic downturn is just the right time to push ahead with cutting-edge ideas.

"Adversity brings out innovation, so entrepreneurship is very much a real opportunity for employment," said Mark Rivers, founder and CEO of Presidents of Enterprising Organizations.

When times are tough, people look for new ways to support themselves and it's a good time to be creative, he said.

Mark Romoff, president and CEO of Ontario Centres of Excellence, says entrepreneurship is independent of the economic climate.

"You need entrepreneurship and entrepreneurs when things are going well as much as you need it when things are going bad," he said.

Romoff would like to see entrepreneurship become more a part of "Canada's DNA."

If you look at many of the country's greatest success stories, he said, they're completely the product of entrepreneurial spirit and entrepreneurial thinking.

In other words: "Guts and almost a disregard for the things that people say are the roadblocks to success," he said.

"You need entrepreneurship and entrepreneurs when things are going well as much as you need it when things are going bad."
President and CEO of Ontario Centres of Excellence Mark Romoff

The road to success is generally a product of failure along the way, Romoff said, and more people need to be willing to risk that failure.

Kunal Gupta, a 23-year-old University of Waterloo graduate, founder of Impact Group and president and CEO of his own mobile solutions company Polar Mobile, says the tough times ahead are just another opportunity for young entrepreneurs.

"In tough times the true winners, the true, solid companies or ideas and concepts come to the surface," he said.

While bigger companies like Yahoo! and Citibank lay off thousands of employees, young people with great ideas and tons of enthusiasm are still going ahead and starting businesses, he said.

"As young people, we thrive on challenge," Gupta said.

Entrepreneurship, however, is risky business and in the event someone's not quite ready to strike out on their own and start their own company on a shoestring, Rivers said it pays to be entrepreneurial in the pursuit of a job.

Figure out what you're passionate about, find companies that are doing it and then figure out what you can do for them.

Pitch yourself, keep pitching and don't give up, he said.

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'Dialogue facilitators' at Queen's
Queen's University has hired six students to work as "dialogue facilitators" in residences to step in when they hear offensive language, as well as encourage discussions about social issues. METRO NEWS SERVICES

Selecting the proper lawyer for your case

WorkplaceLaw

"LAWYERS ARE THE ONLY PERSONS IN WHOM IGNORANCE OF THE LAW IS NOT PUNISHED."
– JEREMY BENTHAM (1748-1832)

How do you win in court? It starts with selecting the proper lawyer. But with countless factors to consider, finding the ideal lawyer to navigate your case is a difficult, if not overwhelming, task. Here are three cautionary tales that I've gleaned from the employment law trenches:

ADVERTISING: A lawyer's search engine rankings have nothing do with his or her legal skill. Rather, Internet-based advertising allows lawyers to pay for and then snatch up high rankings on Google and Yahoo that are not indicative of the quality of the lawyer, her firm, or the actual number of visitors to the website. Similarly, there are no rules limiting lawyers without much experience in employment law from professing that they practise it, on their websites and in the media — and they do. For instance, Toronto's Yellow Pages has ads for 32 lawyers who practise "wrongful dismissal." However, many of those same lawyers appeared when I searched for "family lawyers," which wasn't surprising at all. The reality is that there are few exclusively practising employment lawyers. Most just dabble in the area, despite advertising otherwise. But employment law is specialized. Inquire what percentage of the lawyer's time is spent solely on employment law matters — and don't pay for his or her education.

FREE CONSULTATIONS: Some lawyers advertise "free" consultations. These can be a sham. A free consultation is their opportunity to assess whether they want to take your case but not your opportunity to learn about the risks and costs of proceeding with one. You then pay for that advice afterwards, so really, your consultation wasn't "free" at all. I recently consulted with a client who came to me seeking a second opinion following a complementary session with another lawyer. Their meeting lasted 20 minutes, during which the other lawyer opined that the case was a good one and then had the client pay $1,500 so he could review the file and write a demand letter. There was one problem. The employment contract that the client had signed had all but disposed of the case. The other lawyer hadn't bothered to discuss the contract as a potential problem during their initial meeting (something that most employment lawyers should spot as a matter of course). By the time the lawyer later discovered the issue, the client had been billed twice the standard fee that most counsel generally charge for an initial meeting. In other words, this client's "free" consultation had become something much different. And his admonitory tale is, unfortunately, not an unusual one.

ORAL AGREEMENTS: The biggest problem that most people face with lawyers is their billing practices. This is because the regulatory bodies that oversee lawyers have few restrictions governing how they charge for their work. As a result, most lawyers are left to their own devices. However, one common agreement they use, an oral contract, isn't much of an agreement at all. Here, lawyers bill ad hoc, based on any combination of the time they spend on the file or the results obtained. Where the file requires more work than anticipated, the client pays for the lawyer's time, regardless of the result. But where there is a quick settlement, the client is billed based on percentage without regard to the lawyer's effort. In effect, the lawyer has it both ways. If asked, a lawyer should predict to the best of his or her ability the potential costs of your case. Then confirm that arrangement in writing.

Daniel A. Lublin is an employment lawyer focusing on the law of dismissal; dan@toronto-employmentlawyer.com.

There are a number of factors to consider when hiring a lawyer.

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York student charged with Facebook threat

A York University student has been charged by police in Toronto for posting a death threat on Facebook. Police say the accused made threats against York staff and university property in relation to the ongoing strike. **TORSTAR NEWS SERVICE**

ADVERTISING FEATURE

Finding people who believe in you

When three-year-old Thandiwe Vela emigrated from her native country of Zimbabwe to Toronto in 1990, she hadn't thought much about the colour of her skin.

That changed the first day she walked into a Canadian classroom.

"I remember being so aware of race," says Vela. "I came here speaking Shona and stopped talking all together once I started school. I just thought it's bad enough that I look so different from the other kids and I didn't want to sound different, too."

Vela quickly learned English and removed the communication barrier between herself and her classmates. However, the African-Canadian found great difficulty combating the racial stereotypes adopted by some of her educators.

"I think a lot of people would agree with me that it's not easy to be black in our school system," says Vela. "There's an alarming dropout rate amongst blacks because there is a lot of negativity from the administration. In high school I was encouraged to take applied courses, but I knew I wasn't dumb."

This was the message that the now 21-year-old Vela carried with her to the podium and shared with an auditorium of her peers and role models last Thursday. It was at the 2008 Canadian Association of Black Journalists Student Awards Night that Vela accepted the $1,000 CABJ Centennial College Scholarship and felt vindicated.

Vela is now in the fourth year of her joint degree/diploma program in journalism at Centennial College and the University of Toronto at Scarborough Campus. The program couples solid academic education from U of T with comprehensive and practical journalism skills provided by Centennial.

Centennial College journalism student Thandiwe Vela prepares to collect her Canadian Association of Black Journalists student scholarship at a special presentation on Nov. 20, with CTV journalist Andrea Case looking on.

Vela describes the course as "amazing" and explains that after an unpleasant experience in high school, she was almost shocked by the encouragement and acceptance she received at college.

"At Centennial I really felt like my professors believed in me," says Vela. "It was my program co-ordinator, Jules Elder, who nominated me for the award and said, 'Apply, I think you deserve it.'"

CABJ took Elder's recommendation a step further and notified a thrilled Vela she had been chosen as the winner. Vela believes the committee awarded her with one of four scholarships handed out that evening because she is a good investment and a strong reflection of the CABJ's mandate to shine the light on promising black journalists.

CABJ student representative Sundra Sefa says choosing Vela was a no-brainer.

"Her application jumped out of the pile," says Sefa. "Thandiwe's passion for journalism flowed through her entire entry."

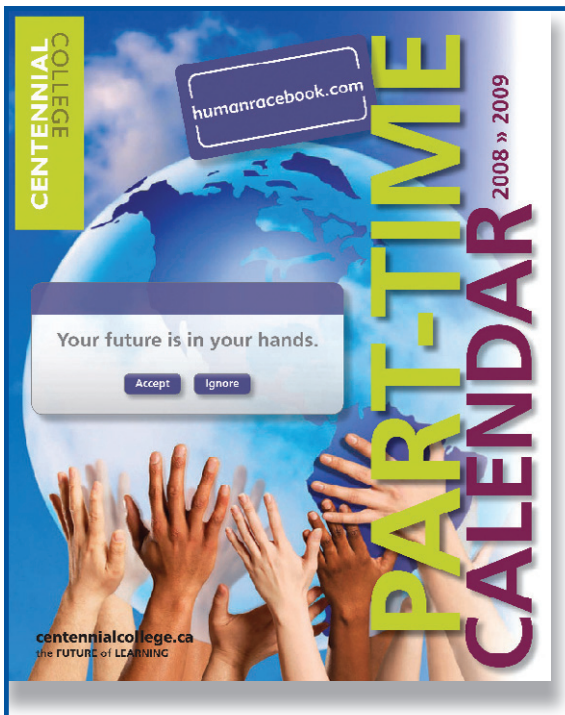
The Student Awards Night drew appearances from Andrea Case of CTV, Centennial's Jules Elder (who also works at OMNI-TV) and Nneka Elliot from CityPulse 24.

After Vela completed her acceptance speech she was greeted with an uproar of applause and nods of approval from a room filled with people she aspires to one day work alongside.

"Getting this award in front of all these people I admire provides a huge boost of confidence," says Vela. "It feels like I'm being recognized and realizing my dreams of becoming an established journalist."

For details about Centennial's unique journalism program in partnership with U of T, visit: www.centennialcollege.ca/thecentre/utscjournalism.

— SHANNON BOODRAM



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Pharmaceutical giant GlaxoSmithKline Inc. has donated $1 million to the University of Manitoba to set up an endowment fund to establish a research chair in the immunobiology of infectious disease. METRO NEWS SERVICES

Office elves deliver interesting gifts

Santa's not the only one delivering presents this holiday season. Nearly eight out of 10 marketing and advertising executives polled said some form of gift giving occurs in their offices.

And creative folks may give the man in red a run for his money when it comes to being innovative. When asked to name the most unusual or unique gifts exchanged in the office, responses ranged from a fully stocked 125-pound aquarium to personalized bobbleheads.

The national study was developed by The Creative Group, a specialized staffing service providing creative, advertising, marketing and web professionals on a project and full-time basis, and conducted by an independent research firm.

It is based on 250 telephone interviews — 125 with advertising executives randomly selected from the nation's 2,000 largest advertising agencies, and 125 with senior marketing executives randomly selected from the nation's 2,000 largest companies.

"Given the current economy, office gift giving may be toned down this year, but there still will be those who want to spread holiday cheer by giving colleagues tokens of appreciation," said Megan Slabinski, executive director of The Creative Group. "Although presents don't have to be expensive, they do need to be thoughtful and appropriate to the work environment."

Among the questionable gifts cited by survey respondents were a voodoo doll of the boss, and an employee who liked to give out portraits of himself. Another gift included a wrapped six-pack of beer.

By contrast, some presents showed considerable thought, including a membership to a local art gallery and a ride on a parade float with Santa.

One employee gave Ohio State football helmets to fans of the sports team, and another employee gave bobbleheads that were replicas of the people receiving them.

Although some thought might have gone into these offerings, it's hard to say what thought was put into the person who gave his assistant a case of tuna, or the colleague that gave orange hair extensions as a gift. Then there were those whose gifts that may not have been heartfelt but did get a laugh, like the presentation of The Clapper — that device that turns things on when you clap. The survey found other laugh-filled office presents included a punching bag that cursed everytime it was hit, and a radar detector to a heavy-footed fellow employee.

METRO NEWS SERVICES

Office gifts can range from the heartfelt to the questionable.

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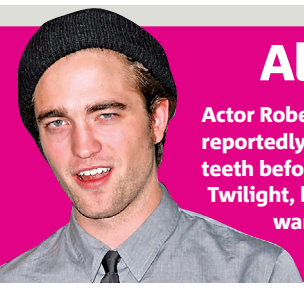
The fight for Nixon
Frank Langella had to fight to play former U.S. president Richard Nixon in new movie Frost/Nixon, because studio bosses wanted to give the role to screen legend Warren Beatty. **IMDB.COM**

Entertainment



All smiles

Actor Robert Pattinson was reportedly forced to fix his teeth before filming new movie Twilight, because producers wanted him to have an alluring smile. IMDB.COM

EDITOR: TINA COSTANZA, TINA.COSTANZA@METRONEWS.CA

●●●●● A CLASSIC; ●●●● EXCELLENT; ●●● GOOD; ●● FAIR; ● POOR

Long trip, but worth it

Australia is a beautifully filmed study of a vast land

Australia
Director: Baz Luhrmann
Stars: Nicole Kidman, Hugh Jackman
Class: STC
Rating: ●●●

STEVE GOW
for Metro Canada

While its length may leave you numb, Australia's passion redeems its bulkiness.

REVIEW There's a lot riding on Australia. For starters, at $130 million, it's the most expensive Aussie film ever made. And while a rather overblown budget is cause enough to concern director Baz Luhrmann (Moulin Rouge), tourism officials are hoping the film will renew their industry as well.

Luhrmann shouldn't worry so much about that. If nothing else, Australia is a beautifully filmed study of a vast land that — as one character says — has "a strange power." What Luhrmann should fret over is the drawn-out narrative that plays to melodramatic excess.

Set during the outbreak of World War II, Australia features Nicole Kidman as Lady Ashley, widow of a mysteriously murdered cattle ranch owner. When confronted by her husband's rival with a takeover bid, Ashley hires a maverick stockman (Hugh Jackman) and joins him on a massive cattle drive across the outback.

While the movie's not short on romance or adventure (including a suspense-filled cattle stampede), this flick really stands apart from its contemporaries through Luhrmann's careful study of Australia's heritage.

Led by 13-year-old newcomer Brandon Walters, Australia sheds light on the Stolen Generations — Aboriginal children who were removed from their families and placed in missions.

Walters is truly the backbone of this movie playing Nullah, a mixed-race child who becomes the surrogate son of Ashley. Not only does he provide the film with a stirring breakout performance, but some much-needed cultural depth as well.

While sitting for the film's 165-minute length may leave you numb down under, Australia's passion redeems its bulkiness; regardless of its strenuous story, this is still a crusade worth catching.

Visit metronews.ca/movies for screen times and to see the trailers for Australia, Milk, Four Christmases and Transporter 3.

Third in Transporter series flat out rocks

Transporter 3
Director: Olivier Megaton
Stars: Jason Statham
Class: 14A
Rating: ●●●½

CHRIS ALEXANDER
for Metro Canada

REVIEW Virtually gone are the days of the vintage Eurotrash flick: Those slick late-'60s French/Italian exports that mined popular American genre trappings while grafting their own highly stylized, haute couture informed sensibilities on top.

From the sexually charged sci-fi hijinks of Barbarella to the kinky comic book thrills of Danger: Diabolik, these quintessentially European art/junk pictures bent rules and existed only to thrill.

Which is why the flawed but fun Luc Besson produced Transporter films are so endearing; their single brained intent is to bombard audiences with eyeball spinning action, beautifully dressed — and undressed — women, sexy cars and exotic locales while blaring pulsing techno music.

The latest entry in the lucrative but critically maligned franchise, simply called Transporter 3, and once more pits an iron jawed, black belt-sporting mercenary driver Frank Martin against a cabal of greasy, well-tailored international baddies.

And while the film boasts the same clunky narrative problems and distractingly dubbed European actors as the first two installments, I'm happy to report that the breathlessly-paced Transporter makes amends by delivering some of the most delirious action set pieces of this or any other year.

Here, Frank finds himself driving a mysterious package and a strung-out Ukranian party girl across Eastern Europe against his will. In a kinky plot device, Frank's fate is literally tied to his beloved Audi.

See, his villainous employers have affixed an explosive device to his wrist, ensuring that if he goes 50-feet from the machine, he'll be blown to smithereens. When Frank curls his lip at this, many car-crunching chases and bone breaking martial arts battles follow — much of Statham's fighting is shirtless.

Fuelled by a wildly unhinged sensibility and with tongue lodged firmly in cheek, Transporter 3 flat out rocks and is a dynamite, retro-pulp entertainment that should please the legion of James Bond fans who were left cold by Quantum of Solace.

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Kanye lazy, not mad

Rapper Kanye West explains why he blogs in all caps: "I USE ALL CAPS CAUSE I'M LAZY NOT MAD. I TYPE WITH ONE HAND AND HOLD THE PHONE WITH THE OTHER." **E! NEWS ONLINE**

🌐🌐🌐🌐🌐 A CLASSIC; 🌐🌐🌐🌐 EXCELLENT; 🌐🌐🌐 GOOD; 🌐🌐 FAIR; 🌐 POOR

Platinum Blonde confirms death

MUSIC Platinum Blonde has officially confirmed the death of bass player Kenny MacLean with a tribute on their website. MacLean had attended a CD release party on Friday night in Toronto to celebrate the upcoming release of his third solo album, Completely. Police said the veteran musician was discovered collapsed and unresponsive Monday at his Toronto apartment.

MacLean joined Platinum Blonde for their second album, 1985's Alien Shores.

THE CANADIAN PRESS

In brief

GAMES The Top 3 most popular game rentals (all platforms) according to Rogers Video: 1. Gears of War 2 (Xbox 360); 2. Call of Duty: World at War (Xbox 360); 3. Call of Duty: World at War (PlayStation 3).

DVDS The Top 3 most popular DVD rentals according to Rogers Video: 1. Tropic Thunder; 2. WALL-E; 3. Get Smart; 4. Hellboy II: The Golden Army; 5. Sisterhood of the Traveling Pants 2. The Top 5 DVD sales: 1. WALL-E, 2. Tropic Thunder; 3. Kung Fu Panda: Secrets of the Furious Five; 4. Sisterhood of the Traveling Pants 2; 5. Hellboy II: The Golden Army.

THE CANADIAN PRESS

A happy holiday diversion

Four **Christmases**

Director: Seth Gordon
Stars: Vince Vaughn, Reese Witherspoon
Classification: PG
Rating: 🌐🌐🌐

PHIL BROWN
for Metro Canada

Four Christmases is no future classic, but it will be a movie that you won't angrily turn off when it starts airing during the holidays.

With the Halloween horror season behind us, it's time for Hollywood to start trudging out its odes to the most commercial of all holidays.

Four Christmases is the first release to hit screens and while it has plenty of the Yuletide carols and goopy sentimentality that we expect this time of year, the concept is just subversive enough to make it worth seeing.

Sure, this is no future Christmas classic, but it will be a movie that you won't angrily turn off when it starts airing on television during the holidays.

Vince Vaughn and Reese Witherspoon star as a professional couple who always avoid their families during Christmas and understandably so, considering that they both come from highly eccentric divorced families (that's four dysfunctional visits per year).

After the film's worst plot contrivance traps them in the country and broadcasts their availability to their kin, Vaughn and Witherspoon embark on their dreaded Four Christmases. The movie is episodic by design and is predictably inconsistent depending on which family the couple are visiting. But with a stacked cast that includes such names as Robert Duvall, Sissy Spacek, Mary Steenburgen and Jon Favreau, the hits are more plentiful than the misses.

The film marks the fictional directorial debut of Seth Gordon, who's hilarious documentary The King Of Kong was probably the most underappreciated gem of 2007.

Gordon has a gift for character comedy that shows in this film, it's just too bad that the rushed production didn't give him a chance to iron out all of the problems with the script. For a holiday movie that starts out refreshingly subversive and anti-family, the film nosedives into sentimentality in the closing scenes and ends on a very predictable and unsatisfying note.

However, with comedy leads as strong as Vaughn and Witherspoon along with a talented supporting cast, the movie offers plenty of laughs before limping to the finish line. With a little more work this could have been an anti-Christmas classic like The Ref.

Instead, it's little more than a pleasant holiday diversion.

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Milk a good source of a great cast

Milk

Director: Gus Van Sant
Stars: Sean Penn, Josh Brolin
Classification: PG
Rating: 🌐🌐🌐½

PHIL BROWN
for Metro Canada

Milk is about Harvey Milk, the first openly gay politician elected in the United States.

Gus Van Sant's Milk is a project the director has been nurturing for years. While the movie adopts a much more conventional cinematic style than the other films he has been experimenting with over the past few years (Elephant, Last Days), Milk is strong enough to stand alongside what has arguably been the most impressive run of films in the eccentric director's career.

The movie is about Harvey Milk, the first openly gay politician elected in the U.S. who was tragically murdered by his colleague Dan White.

Sean Penn stars as Milk and delivers the kind of emotionally draining and utterly truthful performance that is expected of him. The same can be said of Josh Brolin, who gives the potentially one-dimensional Dan White a thoroughly believable and complex psychological profile — which shouldn't be particularly surprising given that he just did the same thing with the far more challenging role of George W. Bush.

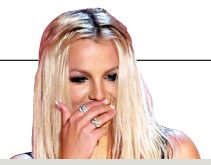
While Penn and Brolin are the major standouts, everyone else in the cast — including James Franco, Emile Hirsch and Alison Pill — seem to understand the socio-cultural importance of the film and deliver excellent performances.

Released mere weeks after the now infamous Prop 8 campaign in California, this film about arguably the greatest gay rights activist could not be more timely. It's obviously a very personal issue for Van Sant, who treats the film with the kind of gravitas it deserves and avoids his typical stylistic flights of fancy unless they serve the film in a meaningful way.

What's also impressive is the way that both Van Sant and screenwriter Dustin Lance Black manage to avoid most of the standard sentimental biopic clichés (with the exception of a particularly grating and unnecessary subplot involving a wheelchair bound fan of Harvey).

Milk might not test the boundaries of narrative filmmaking like the rest of Van Sant's recent work, but it is still an important story told with style and heart that deserves to be seen.

Britney feels like an 'old person'
It's all work and no play for Britney Spears as she prepares for the release of her new album, Circus. "I feel like an old person now," the singer told Rolling Stone. "I do! I go to bed at, like, 9:30 every night, and I don't go out or anything." PEOPLE.COM



Proof of Beatles' Rigby on sale

MUSIC Eleanor Rigby — fact or fiction?

That question, which has bedevilled Beatles' fans for decades, may be answered in part by a 1911 hospital payroll sheet to be auctioned in London Thursday.

The document, sent by Paul McCartney in 1990 to the director of a music charity who had asked for funding, contains the signature of a maid named "E. Rigby" who worked in a Liverpool hospital.

Ted Owen, director of the company auctioning the document, believes the woman who signed the sheet is the "Eleanor Rigby" buried in 1939 in a Liverpool graveyard next to the church where McCartney met John Lennon.

"I've spoken to the person who lived in the house where she used to live, and they've confirmed that the signature is the same signature of the person in the graveyard," he said, adding that the finding may contradict McCartney's longtime assertion that the song was based on a made-up character.

McCartney has said the 1966 song was not based on a real person but has said he may have been subconsciously influenced by having seen the tombstone. THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

Canada Reads books named

Actor Nicholas Campbell, singer Sarah Slean and journalist Avi Lewis are among those participating in the latest edition of the CBC radio program Canada Reads.

The program, in which panellists debate the merits of various books, will air from March 2 to 6 on CBC Radio One.

Lewis will defend The Book of Negroes by Lawrence Hill (HarperCollins Canada) and Slean will push for Mercy Among the Children by David Adams Richards (Anchor Canada).

Campbell will support The Outlander by Gil Adamson (House of Anansi Press).

Other panellists include Quebec broadcaster Anne-Marie Withenshaw, who will speak in favour of The Fat Woman Next Door Is Pregnant (Talonbooks), written by Michel Tremblay and translated by Sheila Fischman.

B.C. author Jen Sookfong Lee, who will support Fruit by Brian Francis (ECW Press).

Jian Ghomeshi, host of CBC Radio One's Q, will moderate the program, which will see panellists voting off titles until a winner is crowned. THE CANADIAN PRESS

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Panettiere to design leather clutch bag

Actress and Dooney & Bourke spokesmodel Hayden Panettiere has teamed up with the label's designer to create a bag for spring 2009. The "Hayden Clutch" is made from Italian calfskin and fastened with a 24 karat gold-plated lion head. **PEOPLE.COM**

Entertainment in brief

BOOKS U.S. first lady Laura Bush is planning a memoir and has met with publishers, she confirmed yesterday.

"I've been talking to some publishers, but nothing has happened yet — just a few visits," she said in a telephone interview to discuss her upcoming special about the White House on the History channel.

A memoir from Laura Bush could be the political version of Garbo Speaks. The public has long been fascinated by the first lady, if only because she has said so little about herself and her life is already a best seller in fictional form, in Curtis Sittenfeld's novel American Wife. **THE ASSOCIATED PRESS**

Britain sweeps International Emmys with hit Life on Mars

The time-travelling detective show Life on Mars picked up its second International Emmy for best drama series on Monday.

It led a British sweep of seven of the 10 awards handed out at a ceremony that also honoured Law & Order creator Dick Wolf.

Sam Waterston, who has appeared as prosecutor Jack McCoy in more than 325 Law & Order episodes since 1994, presented the special International Emmy Founders Award to Wolf.

Wolf's shows are seen in their original or locally produced versions in almost every corner of the globe.

He was joined onstage at the New York Hilton Hotel by his co-star Linus Roache, as well as Dann Florek, Tamara Tunie and Michaela McManus from the spinoff Law & Order: Special Victims Unit.

David Suchet took home the best actor Emmy for his portrayal of Robert Maxwell in the biography series Maxwell about the scandal-plagued final stages of the British media mogul's life.

The best actress honours went to Lucy Cohu for her role in the true-life drama Forgiven. It's about a suburban housewife who reports her husband to authorities for sexually abusing their daughter and later decides to rebuild their lives together.

The I.T. Crowd, which centres on the world of socially awkward information technology geeks working for a British corporation, received the Emmy in the comedy category.

Life on Mars, whose U.S. version premiered on the ABC network this fall, also won the Emmy for best drama series for its first season in 2006.

The latest Emmy was for the show's second and final season which wrapped up the mystery of how time-travelling detective Sam Tyler, played by John Simm, ended up trapped in 1973 after a car crash.

The other British winners included Strictly Bolshoi (arts programming), the story of the first Englishman, choreographer Christopher Wheeldon, to create an original work for Moscow's famed Bolshoi Ballet; Shaun the Sheep (children & young people), about a mischievous sheep who exasperates the sheepdog assigned to watch the flock; and The Beckoning Silence (documentary) depicting a mountaineer's tragic battle for survival on the Eiger in the Swiss Alps.

The winners were chosen from among 40 nominees from 16 countries, honouring excellence in television produced outside the United States. **THE ASSOCIATED PRESS**

Award newcomers: First-ever winners

- Jordan's Al-Igtiyah (The Invasion) in the telenovela category, a Palestinian love story set during the chaotic 2002 Israeli military incursion into the biggest West Bank cities.
- Argentina's Television por la identidad for best TV movie /miniseries, about grandmothers who attempt to recover lost grandchildren adopted during the military dictatorship.

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Beyoncé's childbirth fear
Singer/actress Beyoncé has revealed she wants kids — but adds she's still scarred from witnessing the birth of her nephew. "I was there in the delivery room and it kind of traumatized me," she admits. **PEOPLE.COM**

Silverman braves stormy seas

IntelleVision

STEPHEN SHUGERMAN/GETTY IMAGES

Ben Silverman's time as co-head of NBC Entertainment has been anything but smooth.

FAILING YOUR WAY TO THE TOP: One day there will be a really fantastic glossy magazine article or white-knuckled business book on the career of Ben Silverman and his tenure at NBC. The network, like the rest of the big four, is having a bad year, and after going AWOL for almost a month at the Beijing Olympics while the network suffered painful birthing pangs on their new season, it was expected that that Silverman would be on his way to sacrifice at the altar of the fire god. But as it has been pointed out too many times before, putting "show" and "business" together means that laws of physics and basic math are suspended.

Silverman, a Hollywood character of legendary arrogance and abrasive style, has burned bridges and ruffled feathers by blowing off meetings and spouting bafflegab at the slightest provocation. But he's apparently a master of the deal, and has actually saved the network money while its shows and ratings have continued to tank.

"I could not be more pleased with the job that he's done," NBC CEO Jeff Zucker told the Los Angeles Times. "He's done everything that we've asked of him." Everything includes co-production deals that have slimmed down production costs, and lucrative advertising plugs built into shows like Knight Rider.

Silverman's own projects — the recently-canceled My Own Worst Enemy, and struggling titles like Crusoe and Lipstick Jungle — have fared badly, and NBC remains in last place among the four networks. But Hollywood insiders continue to confirm gobsmacked rumours that his contract will be renewed by the start of the summer, and Katherine Pope, the Universal Media Studio head who oversaw two of the three shows as well as Bionic Woman, after he signed his two-year contract with the company, and it's been all damage control since then. Hollywood, like a medieval village or an isolated Amazon tribe, is a superstitious place. After a run as poor as this, you'd expect that Silverman would be on his way to sacrifice at the altar of the fire god. But as it has been pointed out too many times before, putting "show" and "business" together means that laws of physics and basic math are suspended.

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"They call her the black widow," an unnamed source "growled" to the New York Post. "Every program she touches turns to death." Every show except, of course, Heroes, for which Pope was an original producer before being offered the job at Universal. Her contract is also up in June, and it looks like she's already being measured for her pine box.

Rick McGinnis writes about music, movies, books and television, but not opera.

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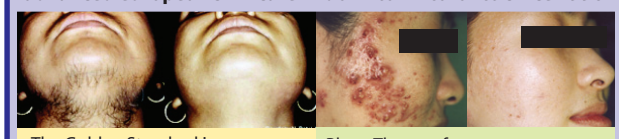
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In brief

YOUTUBE Jordan's Queen Rania has received YouTube's first Visionary Award for a daily video webcast and blog in which she sought to challenge stereotypes of the Arab and Muslim world and encourage dialogue across cultures.
THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

GlobalStyle

Three top models reveal their holiday wish lists, exclusively at metronews.ca/globalstyle

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TO 11/26/08

	Vu	SC	C	7:00	7:30	8:00	8:30	9:00	9:30	10:00	10:30	11:00
primetime	265	353	2	TVO	Meerkat Manor	Meerkat Manor	The Agenda With Steve Paikin		New Tricks		Human Edge (N)		Agenda-Paikin
	211	331	3	GTV	ET Canada	Entertainment	Bones (HDTV PA) (N)		House "Wilson's Heart"		The Guard "Wake" (N)		News (N)
	215	343	4	OMN1	Two/Half Men	The Simpsons	News (N)		Vivere Il	News (N)	The Simpsons	King of the Hill	Metropia
	210	302	6	CBC	Coronation St.	Jeopardy! (N)	Little Mosque	Sophie (N)	CBC News: the fifth estate		CBC News: The National		The Hour
	214	344	7	CITY	Law & Order: SVU		Rosie Live (Live)		Stylista "Clip Show" (N)		I Love Money		News (N)
	212	313	8	CTV	etalk	Hollywood	You Can Dance		Criminal Minds (N)		CSI: NY "The Box" (N)		News (N)
	218	345	11	E!	The Insider (N)	E! News	Knight Rider		Deal or No Deal (iTV) (N)		Heidi Klum: THS		News (N)
	137	763	13	TFO	Panorama		Les Citadins du rebut global		*Docteur Akagi* ★★ (1998, Drame) Akira Emoto, Kumiko Aso.				Enfants
	-	-	14	-	Cold Case		News (N)		News (N)		Two/Half Men	King	Cold Case
	213	326	15	SUN	Scrubs	George Lopez	*A Young Connecticut Yankee in King Arthur's Court* (1995)				To Serve and Protect		Grill Rm.
	-	387	16	CBS	Inside Edition	Hollywood	Old Christine	Gary Unmarr	Criminal Minds (N)		CSI: NY "The Box" (N)		News (N)
	-	385	17	NBC	The Insider (N)	Entertainment	Rosie Live (Live)		Deal or No Deal (iTV) (N)		Law & Order "Falling"		News (N)
	-	386	18	ABC	Wheel-Fortune	Jeopardy! (N)	Pushing Daisies (N)		Private Practice (N)		(10:01) Dirty Sexy Money		News
	219	346	20	ACH-B	Instant Star	TMZ (N)	Monk		Private Practice (N)		(10:01) Dirty Sexy Money		News (N)
	-	-	28	FOX	Judge Judy (N)	Two/Half Men	Bones (HDTV PA) (N)		House "Wilson's Heart"		Seinfeld	Two/Half Men	The Simpsons
	-	388	61	PBS	News-Lehrer	Vicar of Dibley	Monarchy: The Royal Family at Work (HDTV) (DVS)				Maria Callas-Living		Business Rpt.
	297	652	330	WPX	Two/Half Men	Family Guy	Stylista		Stylista "Clip Show" (N)		CW11 News at Ten (N)		Two/Half Men
	296	654	331	SBK	Wheel-Fortune	Jeopardy! (N)	Dr. Phil (HDTV PA) (N)		WBZ News (N)	'70s Show	Frasier	Frasier	Punk'd
	298	653	332	TLA	Jamie Foxx	Wayans Bros.	My Wife-Kids	According-Jim	Family Guy	Family Guy	Two/Half Men	Two/Half Men	Stylista
news	502	390	26	NW	CBC News	Newman	The Hour Stephen Lewis.		CBC News: The National		Lords of the Gourd (N)		National
	500	500	33	CNN	Lou Dobbs Tonight		Campbell Brown: No Bias		Larry King Live		Anderson Cooper 360 (HDTV)		
	509	504	79	CNB	Untold Wealth: Super Rich		Dirty Money: Prostitution		On the Money		The Big Idea With Deutsch		Mad Money
sports	405	417	22	net	Billiards US Open 9 Ball 2008.		Hockey 2008 ADT Canada Russia Challenge -- Russia vs. WHL. From Swift Current, Sask.						Hockey Central
	400	400	30	TSN	That's Hockey!	NHL Hockey Montreal Canadiens at Detroit Red Wings. (HDTV) (Live)					NHL Hockey: Kings at Oilers		
family	411	457	58	OLN	Ed's Up	Videos	The Amazing Race 13		Amazing	Ed's Up	Word Travels	Globe Guides	Pilot Guides
	417	406	81	SC	Pinks	Pass Time	Am. Thunder	Am. Thunder	Pinks	Pinks Outtakes	Wrecked	Wrecked	Pinks
	551	542	25	YTV	Malcolm-Mid.	Home Improve.	Malcolm-Mid.	Fresh Prince	Futurama	Prank Patrol	Mystery Hnt.	Adrenaline Proj	Mystery Hnt.
	554	544	45	TEL	George-Jungle	Bugs Bunny & Tweety Show		Wayside	Johnny Test	Futurama	The Critic	Robot Chicken	Daughter-Devil
	556	540	51	FAM	Wizards-Place	That's-Raven	Zack & Cody	Natural-Sadie	Han. Montana	Life Derek	Ned's School	Cory in House	Zack & Cody
	602	567	27	W	Will & Grace	Friends	Grocery	Maxed Out	Supersize vs. Superskinny		She's Got the Look		Style by Jury
cable variety	570	580	29	MM	Britney: Speared By the Paps		All Access	Britney Spears VideoFlow		TBA	Degrassi: Next	Degrassi: Next	PunchMuch
	615	520	31	A&E	CSI: Miami "Slow Burn"		Bounty Hunter	Bounty Hunter	Bounty Hunter	Bounty Hunter	Parking Wars	Parking Wars	Parking Wars
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	620	523	40	BVO	Desperate Housewives		Berkeley	Bravo!Videos	Wingfield	The Letters	Arts & Minds	The Achievers	Law & Order
	601	562	41	SLC	End of Leash	ET Canada	Last 10	Bulging Brides	Make It Work ... Out		Real Housewives of NYC		Last 10
	522	506	43	HIS	NCIS "Bikini Wax"		Cities of the Underworld		Captain Cook: Obsession		NCIS "Bikini Wax"		Crime Stories
	625	548	44	COM	Air Farce	Just for Laughs		Corner Gas	The Simpsons	South Park	House Party	RENO 911!	Daily Show
	600	564	46	H&G	House Hunters	Property Virgin	Mansions	The Stagers	Property Virgin	Unsellable	Million Dollar Listing		Holmes-Homes
	294	529	47	TBS	House-Payne	House-Payne	*A Beautiful Mind* ★★★ (2001, Biography) Russell Crowe, Ed Harris.					Family Guy	Family Guy
	576	582	49	BET	106 & Park	*ATL* ★★ (2006, Comedy-Drama) Tip "T.I." Harris, Lauren London.					Keyshia Cole	Brother	Black Carpet
	627	528	50	SPC	Lost "Three Minutes"		Star Trek: Deep Space Nine		Battlestar Galactica		Ghost Hunters International (N)		Stargate SG-1
	581	566	52	MTV	Busted	After	MTV News	Cribs	Paris Hilton's My New BFF		Dance Life	Dance Life	MTV Live
	618	524	54	TROP	Beverly Hills, 90210		Reality	What Happen?	Family Guy	Seinfeld	Seinfeld	'70s Show	Family Guy
	603	561	56	FOOD	The Main	Chef at Home	Restaurant Makeover		Iron Chef America		Top Chef		Dinner Imposs.
	261	394	60	V	Murder, She Wrote		Summer Wine	Dinnerladies	Darling Buds of May		Enigma		Hope Island
	621	527	63	STR	The Ellen DeGeneres Show		TMZ (N)	etalk	Paris Hilton's My New BFF		The Tonight Show-Jay Leno		TMZ
	553	546	65	TRE	Wonder Pets	Nght Grdn	Friend Rabbit	Franklin	Little Bear	Miss Spider	Comfy Couch	Rolie Polie Olie	Beren. Bears
	115	711	101	TVA	Occupation	Poule-oeufs or	Destinées (HDTV) (N) (SC)		Les Soeurs Elliot (N) (SC)		TVA 22 heures	(10:45) Denis Lévesque	
	126	730	102	RDI	24 Heures en 60 minutes		Grands reportages (SC)		Le Téléjournal (SC)		RDI en direct	Le National	Le Téléjournal
	526	507	249	VIVA	Judging Amy		Commander In Chief		The West Wing		Mediums	Psychic Detect	Mediums
	300	601	301	M1	*The Mist*	(7:25) *Demons From Her Past* (2007)			*There Will Be Blood* ★★★★ (2007, Drama) Daniel Day-Lewis.				
	305	612	306	PIX	(7:15) *Blindside* ★★ (1987, Drama) Harvey Keitel.				*Scream* ★★★ (1996, Horror) Neve Campbell.				*Scream 2*

critics' corner

Rosie Live
Remember Carol Burnett? Sonny & Cher? Glen Campbell? Jim Nabors? Former talk show host Rosie O'Donnell attempts to bring back the good old days of the variety show with this new special. She'll do an opening monologue, perform in sketches, introduce musical acts and give out prizes to members of the studio audience; viewers at home also have the chance to win goodies. 8 PM on NBC CITY

Deal or No Deal
Ashley Otte, a hardworking college student from Randolph, Minn., competes in hopes of winning enough money to pay off her student loans and start enjoying college life. But when she mistakenly reveals to Howie that her biggest fear is turkeys, the Banker puts her family in a cage with eight live turkeys. At least there'll be plenty of drumsticks. Viewers at home can play along for a chance to win $50,000. 9 PM on E! NBC

Way and wife expecting baby

My Chemical Romance singer Gerard Way and his wife Lindsey Ballato are expecting a baby due early next summer, his rep confirms to People. **PEOPLE.COM**

Celebrity Buzz

Leo fights to keep privacy

GETTY IMAGES

PEOPLE Actor Leonardo DiCaprio has vowed to boycott the paparazzi, dubbing them "disrespectful and dangerous," imdb.com reports.

DiCaprio admits he's been fighting to stay away from the limelight since turning into a major Hollywood star, and he's keen to keep his name out of the press.

"Actually, I'm not in the tabloids anymore. I am sometimes, but I've watched the culture change. I'm old hat. And I love it. You know what it is with me? This is something I'd like to clarify. I've heard people say, 'Because you hide, it makes you seem ungrateful,'" he says. "The mere fact that these — I'll use the word piles — are earning money from exploiting my image is the only reason I hide myself or am not a photo-friendly person. I do not like the way they conduct themselves. I think they're disrespectful and dangerous. The reason I don't pose or smile or that I seem mad is that I don't want them to make a living off my private life."

METRO NEWS SERVICES

Cruise's family plans

CHILDREN Tom Cruise is keen to expand his family with Katie Holmes, but is waiting until his wife finishes her current stint on Broadway before trying for another baby, imdb.com reports.

Holmes is starring in a new adaptation of Arthur Miller's All My Sons and will be based in New York until the end of her run, which is expected to finish early next year.

Cruise admits the couple, who already have two-year-old daughter Suri, are keen for another baby, but they have to wait until Holmes returns to the family home in California.

"We have already heard she's pregnant but it's not true. But yes, we will have more children. I'm saying this, but Kate's not here! She's working and we're enjoying this time right now. It's very precious, we don't get this time back," Cruise says.

METRO NEWS SERVICES

Simpson wrote in diary to heal

WELL-BEING Jessica Simpson put pen to paper to cure her of the heartbreak following her split from husband Nick Lachey because writing in her diary was "therapeutic" for the star, femalefirst.co.uk reports.

The singer, who divorced Lachey in 2002 after three years of marriage, found it helpful to keep a journal of her thoughts and feelings.

Simpson later used the emotional entries as inspiration for her music.

"It (writing in a diary) is very, very therapeutic," she says. "There is a lot about heartbreak, there is a lot about perseverance. I used it as inspiration for my album."

METRO NEWS SERVICES

Dating authors offer Aniston advice

RELATIONSHIPS Jennifer Aniston has been offered dating advice by the authors of The Rules, femalefirst.co.uk reports.

Sherrie Schneider, who co-wrote the dating manual with Ellen Fein, says the former Friends actress should not have spoken publicly about her summer breakup from John Mayer, and should also keep quiet about her ex-husband Brad Pitt's relationship with Angelina Jolie.

"Breaking up is never easy, but it doesn't have to be humiliating," Schneider said. "Never mention Brad's or John Mayer's name in public. Also, don't say anything bad about Brad, like when you said he was missing a sensitivity chip."

Referring to Aniston's recent first interview about Jolie, during which she called the actress "uncool" for admitting she had started her relationship with Pitt while he was still married, Schneider added: "Never talk about Angelina or call her 'uncool,' even if she was uncool. She does not exist in your world."

METRO NEWS SERVICES

No motherhood for Carrie

CAREER Sarah Jessica Parker has promised fans her character Carrie Bradshaw will not become a mother in the Sex And The City: The Movie sequel because it would go against the character's beliefs, imdb.com reports.

"It doesn't seem as if that's going to be a choice she'll make," she says. "I don't know. Michael (Patrick King, director) and I never talk about it. That doesn't mean that won't be part of the story. We just haven't figured it out. It feels a little bit manipulative to toss that into the mix because she seems so pointed in a different direction."

METRO NEWS SERVICES

Winehouse is sent to hospital

HEALTH Singer Amy Winehouse was admitted to a private London hospital on Sunday, her rep tells CNN.

Chris Goodman told the news outlet that medication Winehouse was taking made her ill, and doctors admitted her to the clinic for investigation, People.com reports.

Winehouse previously checked into a London hospital in July after suffering a bad reaction to her medication. But Goodman did not disclose which medications were involved in either case.

METRO NEWS SERVICES

Brandy devastated

TRAGEDY Brandy says she was so devastated by her high-speed car crash that killed another woman motorist in Los Angeles two years ago, "there was a point when I didn't feel like it was OK to live on — because someone else lost their life," PageSix.com reports.

METRO NEWS SERVICES

Paris booed at birthday party

PEOPLE Paris Hilton received a chilly reception at an event in Los Angeles.

The hotel heiress was set to introduce the Pussycat Dolls at a birthday party for designer Christian Audigier's daughter, Crystal, but when Audigier asked the crowd if they wanted to see Paris, they broke out in a chorus of boos. According to a source at the party, "The entire room — which had just cheered when they thought Britney Spears was coming — booed loudly. Paris was practically in tears and left without taking the stage."

NED EHRBAR/ METRO WORLD NEWS

Butler may not be charged in fight

LEGAL Actor Gerard Butler has been given the chance to resolve his recent fight with a paparazzo without facing criminal charges, imdb.com reports.

Butler stands accused of beating up a photographer who followed him as he left a Los Angeles bar last month.

The snapper was reportedly treated in hospital for the injuries he suffered.

According to TMZ.com, Butler has been ordered to attend an informal hearing at the City Attorney's office.

METRO NEWS SERVICES

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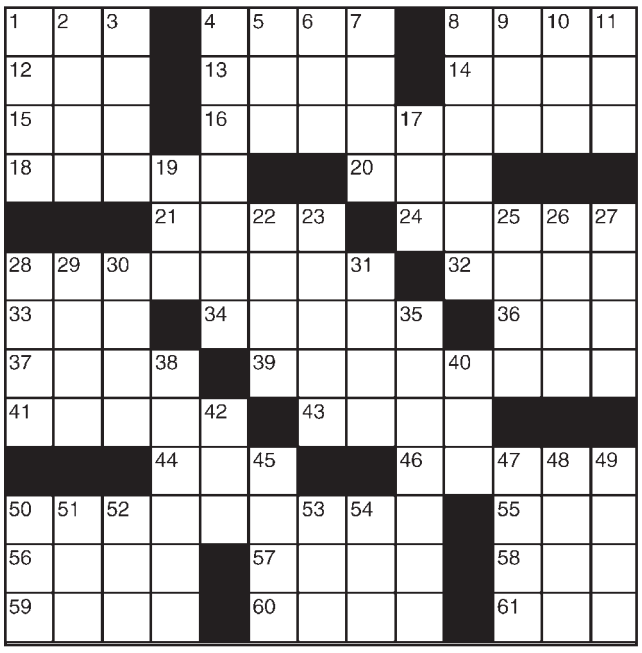


Crossword across

1 Do sums
4 Apprehend
8 Film segment
12 Anger
13 Medley
14 Similar to
15 Brooks or Torme
16 Chair protector
18 Filch
20 Corrode
21 Open somewhat
24 Tibet's capital
28 One with lots of four-legged friends?
32 Satan's specialty
33 Submachine gun
34 Jazz style
36 A Gershwin
37 Raised
39 Pirate
41 Comic Silverman
43 Cornfield trespasser
44 Scratch
46 Tangle
50 Read quickly
55 Dinner for Dobbin
56 Staffer
57 "David Copperfield" character
58 Swelled head
59 Banana castoff
60 Took to the pool
61 Chaps

Crossword down

1 Intentions
2 Bob's "The Price Is Right" successor
3 Sandwich shop
4 Rhinoplasty
5 The whole enchilada
6 Midafternoon hour on a sundial
7 Easy bounding gait
8 Dress
9 Tyler or Ullmann
10 White House nickname
11 Apiece
17 Western st.
19 Crony
22 Birds, to Brutus
23 Violin's ancestor
25 Tel —
26 Paddock papa
27 Winged
28 Taverns
29 Pound of poetry
30 Wedding cake feature
31 Bellow
35 Telecast
38 Maiden
40 Possess
42 Possesses
45 Fishing gear
47 Attention getter
48 Storm
49 French city
50 Space
51 Falsehood
52 Praise in verse
53 Solemn promise
54 Historic time

Sudoku

HOW TO PLAY: Digits 1 through 9 will appear once in each zone – one zone is an outlined 3x3 grid within the larger puzzle grid. There are nine zones in the puzzle. Do not enter a digit into a box if it already appears elsewhere in the same zone, row across or column down the entire puzzle.

	8		9		2		7	
9								8
		2	3		8	4		
	1		2	4	6		8	
	7						2	
	4		7	5	1		9	
		3	1		5	8		
1								2
	6		4		7		3	

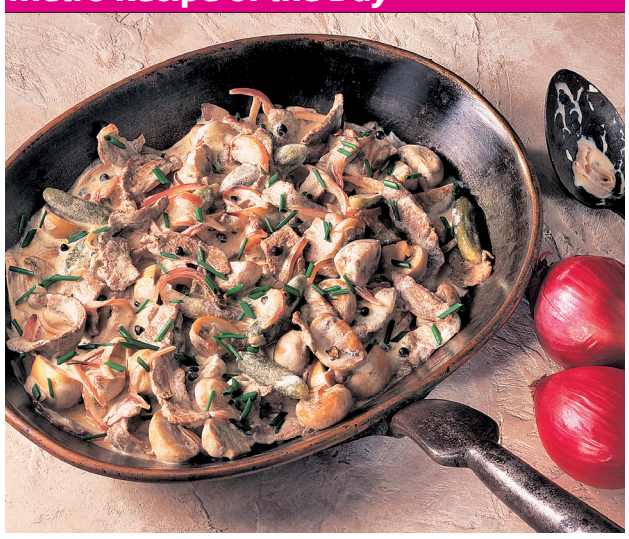
PREVIOUS DAY'S CROSSWORD AND SUDOKU ANSWERS:

2	3	7	6	1	4	9	5	8
6	8	4	9	5	7	1	2	3
5	9	1	3	2	8	4	7	6
1	5	2	4	3	6	7	8	9
9	7	3	5	8	1	6	4	2
4	6	8	7	9	2	3	1	5
8	1	6	2	4	3	5	9	7
3	4	9	8	7	5	2	6	1
7	2	5	1	6	9	8	3	4

SUDOKU SOLVE TIME:

Under 13 min .....Genius
13-17 min.....Scholar
17-21 min .....Smart
21-25 min .....Not bad
25+ min.....Keep practising

Metro Recipe of the Day



Beef Stroganoff

INGREDIENTS:

3 tbsp olive oil
1 large red onion
1/2 lb (230g) small chestnut mushrooms
1 1/4 lb (560g) beef fillet
2 tsp (10 mL) fresh green peppercorns in brine
Salt
2 tbsp (25 mL) Dijon mustard
1 1/4 cup (300 mL) sour cream
8 small drained cocktail gherkins
A small bunch of chives

METHOD:

1. Heat 1 tbsp (15 mL) oil in a large frying pan. Halve, peel, and thinly slice onion, then fry over a moderate heat until slightly softened, about 2 or 3 minutes.
2. Meanwhile, clean and halve mushrooms and add to the pan. Increase heat and cook, stirring, for about 5 minutes, until softened and most liquid has evaporated.
3. While mushrooms are cooking, slice beef fillet very thinly, then cut across the grain into thin strips.
4. When mushrooms are cooked, put into a large bowl with onion and set aside.
5. Add 1 tbsp (15 mL) oil to the pan and increase heat to high. Add half of beef and stir-fry for 2–3 minutes, or until very lightly browned, then remove. Heat remaining oil and cook rest of beef the same way.
6. Return onion, mushrooms and first batch of beef with juices to the frying pan. Crush green peppercorns, add to the pan with some salt, and heat through for 1–2 minutes.
7. Blend mustard and sour cream together and stir into beef, with gherkins. Heat through gently, without boiling. Trim, rinse, and dry chives, snip over top and serve.

SERVES 4

rd.ca
For nutritional information on this and other great recipes, go to **rd.ca** or check out **Key Ingredients in this month's Reader's Digest, on newsstands now!**
Reader's Digest Diva's Dozen

Horoscopes

AVATAR VENUS

ARIES
MARCH 21-APRIL 20
A headstrong person misses talking to you. Emotional distress is caused by an unusual amount of problems. Don't give up on yourself.

TAURUS
APRIL 21-MAY 21
Falling in love is OK, if you think long and hard first. Pushiness makes for an unsettling situation. Decadent foods are clues to your secret longings.

GEMINI
MAY 22-JUNE 21
An unexpected escapade torments your heart. Love will have a deeper meaning. Someone hasn't changed in a significant way.

CANCER
JUNE 22-JULY 22
Give someone a good reason to stay. A weight problem is spitefully discussed. Bring your life back into focus.

LEO
JULY 23-AUG 23
Bittersweet memories accompany a departing hero. Curiosity is satisfied by a devoted sweetheart. An expert interferes with tried and true plans.

VIRGO
AUG 24-SEPT 22
Lack of faith will cause a crash. Being ignored will wreck your hard won serenity. Someone's loyalty is being questioned.

LIBRA
SEPT 23-OCT 23
Be assured that nobody will let you down. A mastermind should not be tangled with. A self-pitying person ignores your friendly smile.

SCORPIO
OCT 24-NOV 22
A discovery takes on greater significance. Satisfaction is guaranteed if you keep a promise. An argumentative stranger tells the truth.

SAGITTARIUS
NOV 23-DEC 21
All you want to do is have some fun. Be poised when facing a difficult cross-examination. An awesome adventure baffles onlookers.

CAPRICORN
DEC 22-JAN 20
Say goodbye to a domineering woman. A special dream will come true. Take good care of a fragile elder.

AQUARIUS
JAN 21-FEB 18
An optimist will touch your heart. Prance around with crazy old friends. Stop speculating about how things might have been.

PISCES
FEB 19-MARCH 20
Pleasure is found in new music. Disappointment ends a relationship. Stay where you are for a while.

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